



KINGDOM COME™



Mark WAID

Alex ROSS

KINGDOM COME BOOK THREE



KINGDOM COME




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DC COMICS

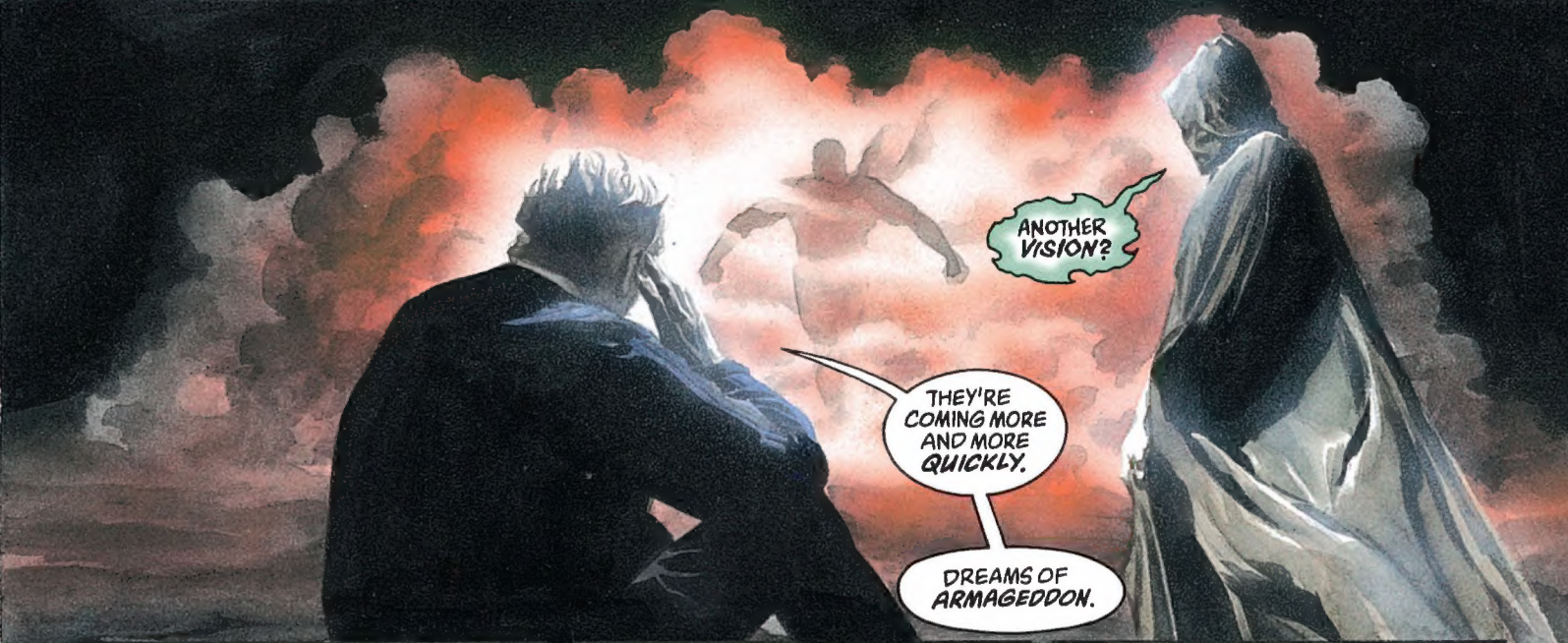
Mark WAID Alex ROSS



"...and he cried with a
loud voice, as when a
lion roareth..."

"...and when he
had cried..."

"...SEVEN THUNDERS
uttered their voices..."



ANOTHER
VISION?

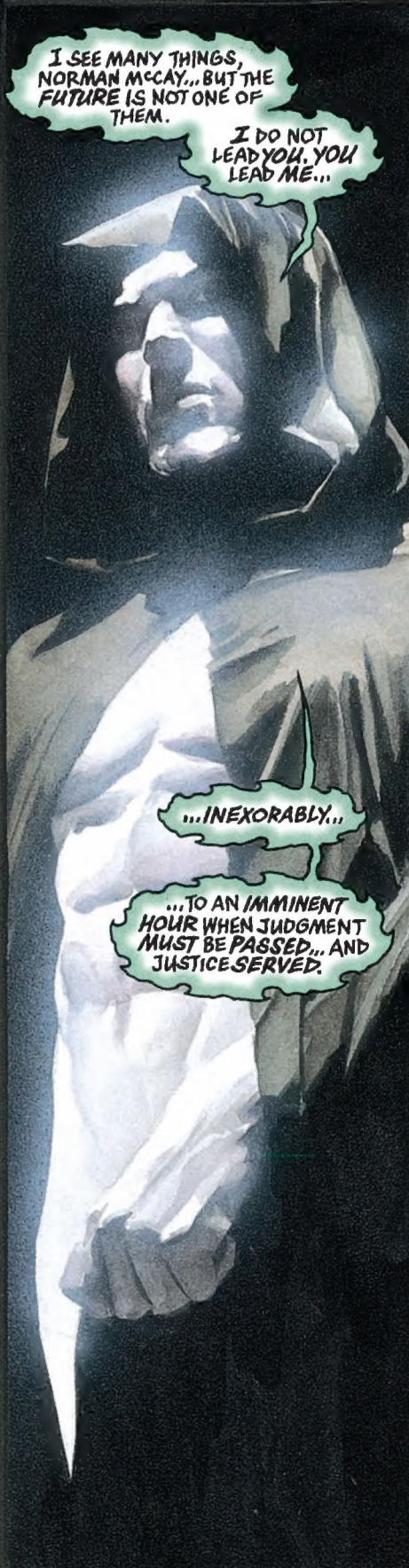
THEY'RE
COMING MORE
AND MORE
QUICKLY.

DREAMS OF
ARMAGEDDON.



CERTAINLY, YOU MUST
SHARE THEM. HOW ELSE
DO YOU EXPLAIN THE ROAD
WE WALK?

HOW ELSE DO YOU
UNERRINGLY LEAD US
TO THE TABLEAUX AND
REALITIES BEHIND
MY DREAMS?



I SEE MANY THINGS,
NORMAN MCCAY... BUT THE
FUTURE IS NOT ONE OF
THEM.

I DO NOT
LEAD YOU. YOU
LEAD ME...

...INEXORABLY...

...TO AN IMMINENT
HOUR WHEN JUDGMENT
MUST BE PASSED... AND
JUSTICE SERVED.




ONLY YOU
FORESEE THE ROAD
TO RAGNAROK.

And with that
pronouncement,
we begin once
more to wander
the Earth like
spirits. Time
ebbs and flows
around us.

Many of the places
I see are new and
strange.

Others...



...all too familiar.

ONCE THE KANSAS WASTELANDS WERE STRIPPED OF RADIATION, SUPERMAN'S PENITENTIARY WAS FAST COMPLETED.

THE GULAG WAS BUILT TO IMPRISON THE DEADLIEST AND MOST UNCONTROLLABLE OF THE SUPERHUMANS.

THANKS TO ITS VAST SIZE, IT WAS INTENDED TO HOUSE PRISONERS FOR MONTHS TO COME.

WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF ITS CONSTRUCTION...



"...IT FILLED BEYOND CAPACITY."

"STILL, THE WALLS HOLD... THANKS IN NO SMALL PART TO THE GULAG'S ARCHITECT AND WARDEN."



"ONCE THE GREATEST ESCAPE ARTIST OF THREE WORLDS, SCOTT FREE IS AN UNPARALLELED MASTER OF BONDS AND TRAPS."





PLEASE UNDERSTAND
OUR *INTENT*. NONE OF YOU
ARE HERE FOR *PUNISHMENT*.
YOU'RE HERE FOR
EDUCATION.

WE'RE HERE
BECAUSE OF *FORCED*
BLISSING, YOU STUPID
RECORDING!

HOW MANY
DIFFERENT WAYS
CAN YOU *SPEW*
THAT POLLYANNA
CRAP?



THE *POWERS* WE HAVE...
THE THINGS WE *DO*... THEY'RE
MEANT TO *INSPIRE* ORDINARY
CITIZENS... NOT *INTIMIDATE*
THEM. NOT *TERRIFY* THEM.

DAY AFTER
DAY, HE TALKS
TO US LIKE WE'RE
THE *BAD GUYS!*

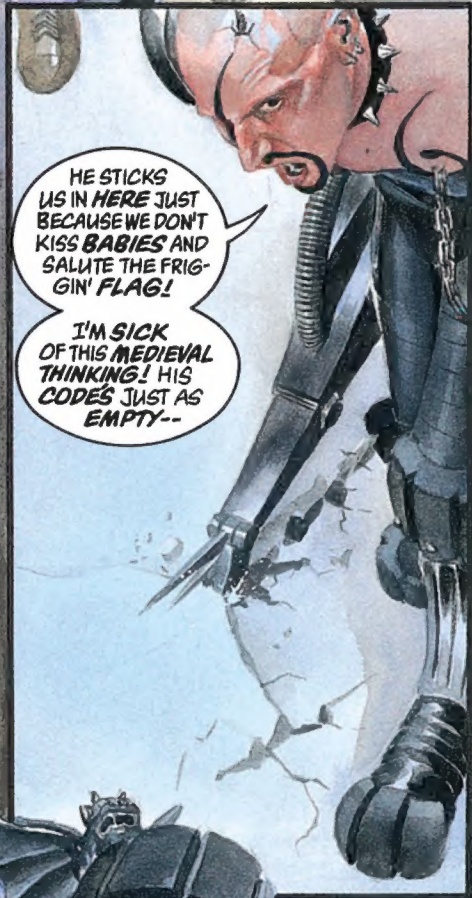
WHO BAGGED
ECLIPSO, HUH? WHO
TOASTED *RA'S ALGHUL*?
GUYS LIKE *US*, THAT'S
WHO! WE SAVED LIVES,
MAN!



WE CANNOT ACT
AS *JUDGE* AND *JURY*.
WE ADHERE TO A *MORAL*
CODE BASED ON THE
PRESERVATION OF
LIFE...

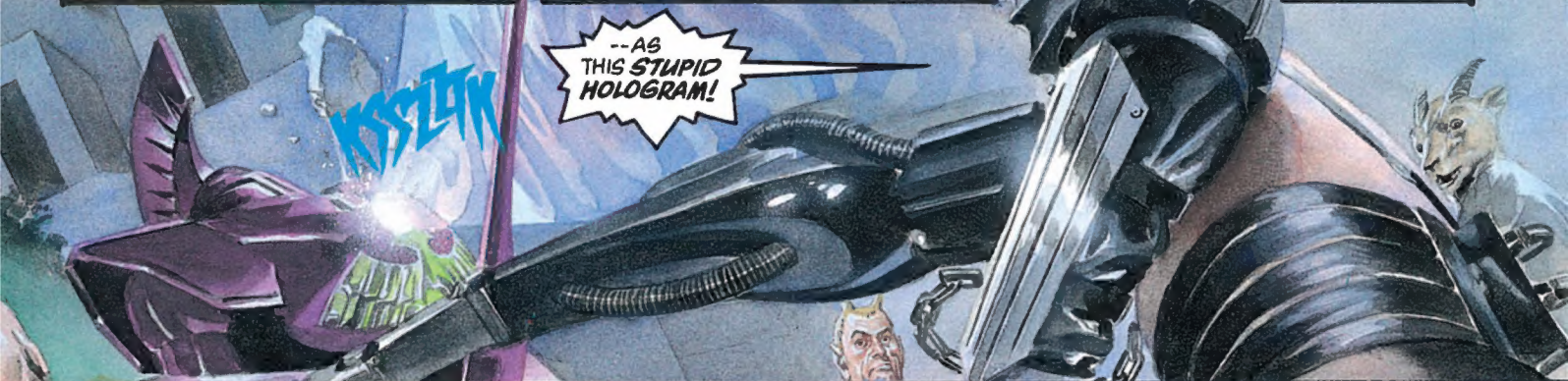
EASY FOR *HIM*
TO SAY, DID HE EVER
HAVE TO FIGHT THE
SLAUGHTER BRIGADE
?

"MAN OF TOMORROW," MY
ASS. TRY "MAN OF THE NINETEEN-
FIFTIES!" "TIMES CHANGE..." BUT
HE STILL EXPECTS EVERYONE TO
LIVE UP TO SOME COBWEBBED
CODE!



HE STICKS
US IN *HERE* JUST
BECAUSE WE DON'T
KISS *BABIES* AND
SALUTE THE FRIG-
GIN' *FLAG!*

I'M *SICK*
OF THIS *MEDIEVAL*
THINKING! HIS
CODES JUST AS
EMPTY--



--AS
THIS *STUPID*
HOLOGRAM!



SORRY
YOU FEEL
THAT WAY.

UH-OH...

THAT MUST BE WHY YOU OPENED **FIRE** IN THE MIDDLE OF A **HUMAN CROWD**. WHY YOU THOUGHT IT WAS **ACCEPTABLE** TO ENDANGER AN ENTIRE **CABLE CAR** FULL OF **UNARMED CITIZENS**.

I'M SURE VON BACH WOULD AGREE WITH YOU. WE BROUGHT HIM IN FOR KILLING OPPONENTS WHO HAD **ALREADY SUR-RENDERED**.

Even as a **wraith**, I feel the air **electrify**. The prisoners are packed too closely. Nerves are **raw**.

Temper's flare.

Schweinhund!

Conflicts escalate.

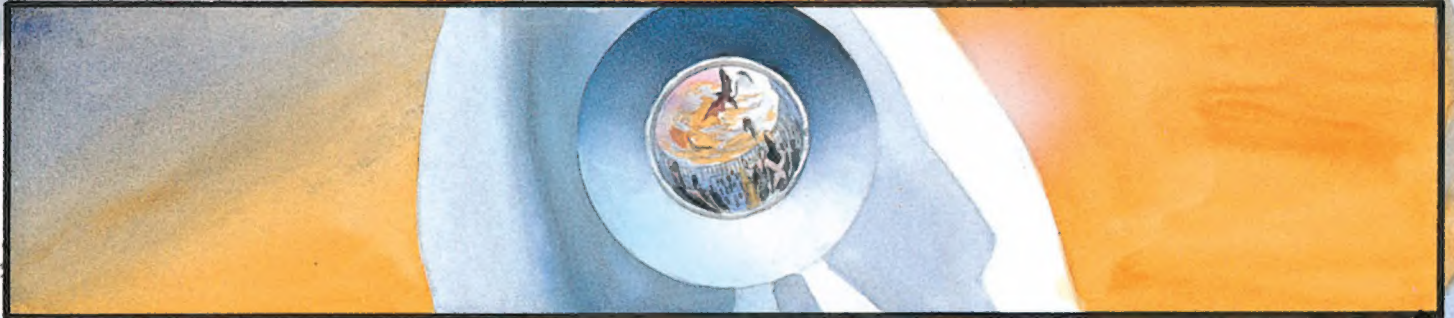
THOOM!

YOU HAVE A LOT TO **LEARN**, VON BACH. GET TO IT.

Kein Drohung, Kosmonaut!

VON BACH? YOU ALL RIGHT, MAN?

うんんん!
おもったよりも
おせい!





...EVEN TO THE
OLD WIZARD WHO
FIRST CALLED DOWN
THE THUNDER
FOR HIM.

EVEN NOW, THE WIZARD
PLEADS FOR UNDERSTANDING
FROM HIS BRETHREN...

...THE GALACTIC LORDS AND
IMMORTALS WHO ARE THE
QUINTESSENCE OF ALL POWER
COSMIC...



PLEASE...I COULD
LOVE HIM NO MORE WERE
HE MY SON...AND HE
IS LOST!

WE MUST
HELP HIM! WE
MUST HELP THEM
ALL!

NO MORE, SHAZAM. O'ER
THE MILLENNIA, WE HAVE OFTEN
LENT OUR GUIDANCE AND WISDOM
TO THE EARTHLINGS... ONLY TO
WATCH THEM MARCH PROUDLY
TOWARDS DISASTER.



GANTHET IS NOT
WRONG. THE HUMANS
ARE NOT OUR RESPONSIB-
ILITY. THEY ARE BUT
MOTES IN THE COSMOS
... AN INSIGNIFICANT
FACTOR IN THE
GRAND LIFE
EQUATION.



HOW
INTERESTING
THAT YOU INSIST
UPON THIS. THAT
YOU ARE ALL SO
CONCERNED
WITH HOW
UNCONCERNED
YOU SHOULD
ACT.

TELL ME.
DO YOU THEN
DWELL ON
THE EARTH'S
PROBLEMS
BECAUSE YOU
ARE SO
COSMICALLY
BORED...OR
IS IT JUST
POSSIBLE...

...THAT YOU
CONGREGATE IN
ORDER TO PREVENT
EACH OTHER FROM
INTERFERING...?



Clearly, their conversation was not meant for my ears. My senses assaulted, I turn away...



...only to face a dead man.

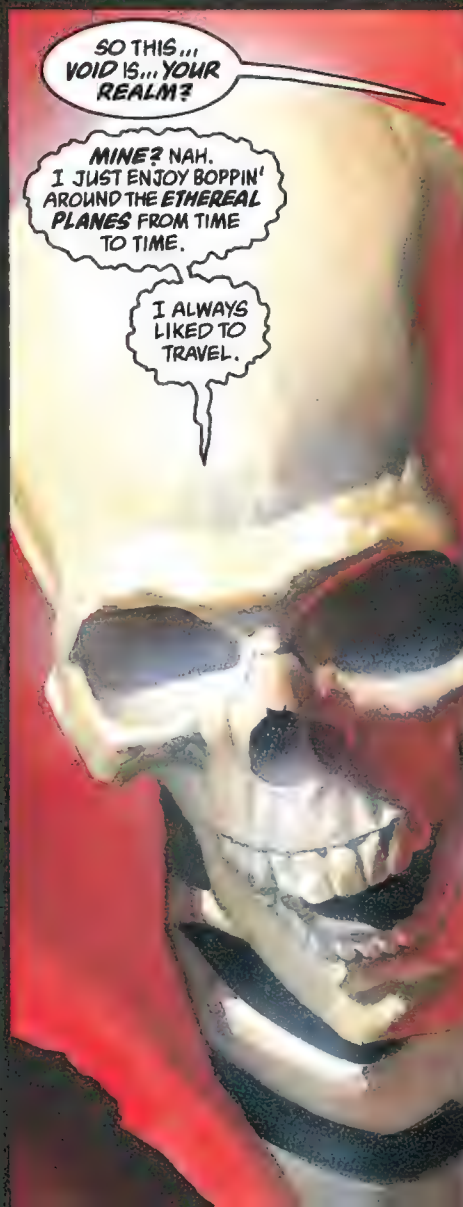
HIYA.



YOU...YOU CAN SEE ME...?

EVEN THOUGH I GOT NO EYES! PRETTY WILD, HUH?

NAME'S BOSTON. I'M A GHOST. NICE TO MEETCHA.



SO THIS... VOID IS... YOUR REALM?

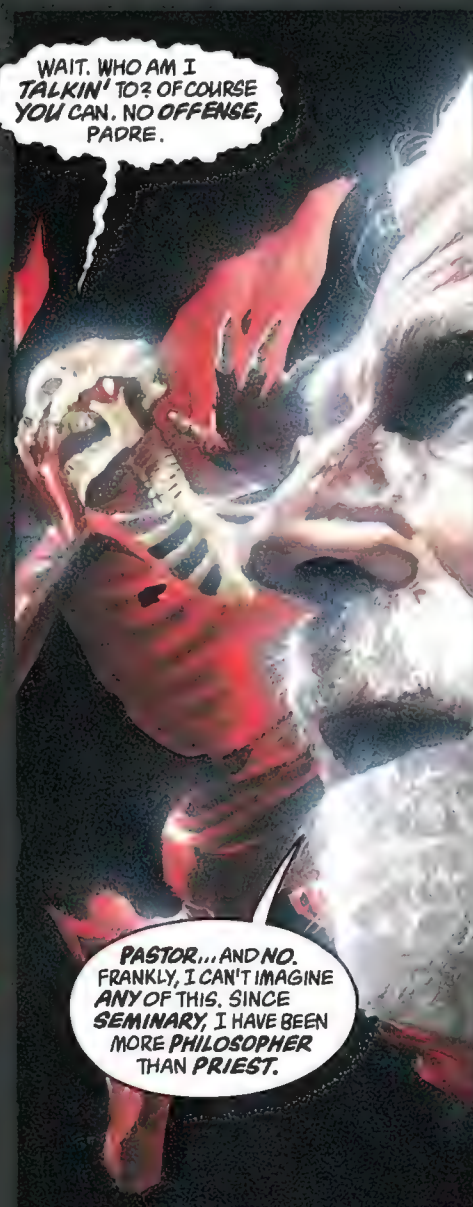
MINE? NAH. I JUST ENJOY BOPPIN' AROUND THE ETHEREAL PLANES FROM TIME TO TIME.

I ALWAYS LIKED TO TRAVEL.



USED TO BE WITH THE CIRCUS. I WAS A DAREDEVIL TRAPEZE JOCKEY. NOW I'M THE AGENT OF A HIGHER POWER.

CAN YOU IMAGINE?



WAIT. WHO AM I TALKIN' TO? OF COURSE YOU CAN. NO OFFENSE, PADRE.

PASTOR...AND NO. FRANKLY, I CAN'T IMAGINE ANY OF THIS. SINCE SEMINARY, I HAVE BEEN MORE PHILOSOPHER THAN PRIEST.



IN MY CHURCH, I PREACHED THAT GOD IS NOT A PERSON... BUT RATHER, A FORCE WITH MANY NAMES...

...LIKE RAMA KUSHNA, F'R INSTANCE...

...ONE THAT MOTIVATES US TO MASTER OUR OWN FATE.

I NEVER BELIEVED IN THE OLD-WORLD NOTION OF ASSIGNING A PHYSICAL FACE TO THAT FORCE OR ITS AGENTS... BUT NOW...

TELL ME, IS THE SPECTRE TRULY AN ANGEL?

OH, ABSOLUTELY.



AN ANGEL OF DEATH.

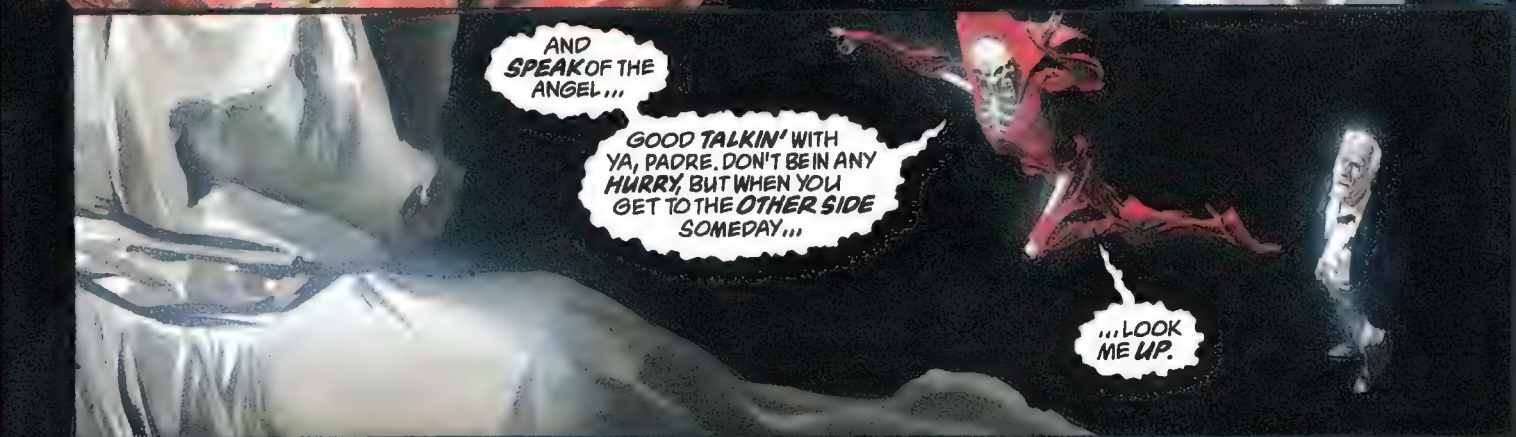


DON'T GET ME WRONG. HE USETA BE A NORMAL JOE. A COP, AS I RECALL.

BUT FROM THE MOMENT HE GOT TAPPED BY THE BIG G T'BE AN AVENGING SPIRIT, HE STARTED TO LOSE TOUCH WITH HIS HUMAN SIDE,

LONG TIME AGO, HE WAS A SUPER-HERO HIMSELF. SINCE THEN, HE'S GOTTEN WEIRDER AND WEIRDER, AND NOW... WELL, I' TELL YOU THE TRUTH...

...YOU CAN'T BE SURE WHOSE SIDE HE'LL TAKE IN ANY OF THIS. CAPICE?



AND SPEAK OF THE ANGEL...

GOOD TALKIN' WITH YA, PADRE. DON'T BE IN ANY HURRY, BUT WHEN YOU GET TO THE OTHER SIDE SOMEDAY...

...LOOK ME UP.



...SO THEN I
FLEW HIM UP TO ABOUT,
OH, HERE...

...AND I SAID, "DO YOU
SEE THAT BEAUTIFUL BLUE
MARBLE, BRAINIAC? THAT'S
MY WORLD. RETURN IT.
NOW."

DID HE
HEAR
YOU?

ACTUALLY, NOT IN AIRLESS
SPACE, NO. BUT BELIEVE ME, HE
GOT THE MESSAGE. NORAD WAS
BACK ON LINE WITHIN FIVE
MINUTES.

SO DID
YOU DESTROY
HIM?

JUST SHORT OF. BURIED
SOME OF HIS CIRCUITRY ON SATURN
...SOME ON ARGO...

...AND THE REST
INSIDE A PULITZER
IN CLARK'S APART-
MENT.

OH, THAT'S
FUNNY. YOU NEVER
TOLD ME THAT STORY
BEFORE.

GODS...
THOSE WERE BETTER
DAYS...

EASIER,
ANYWAY.

DIANA, WHAT'S THIS
ABOUT BEING OUSTED
BY YOUR OWN PEOPLE?
WHEN DID THIS
HAPPEN?

SHORTLY AFTER
YOU WENT INTO
SECLUSION.

FOR YEARS, I HAD BEEN THE
AMAZONS' AMBASSADOR TO THE
OUTSIDE WORLD. MY MISSION WAS
TO SPREAD A MESSAGE OF PEACE
AND ORDER.


AS THE WORLD
CONTINUED TO DARKEN,
THERE WAS SOME DOUBT
AS TO HOW WELL I HAD
DONE MY JOB.



MY AMAZON SISTERS ...
MY OWN MOTHER ... CAME TO
SUGGEST THAT I HAD PERHAPS
FAILED.



THEY
ACTUALLY
PUT ME ON
TRIAL.



I PLED MY CASE ...
BUT IN THE END, THEY
DECREEED THAT I HAD,
INDEED, NOT CHANGED
MAN'S WORLD.



THAT IT
HAD CHANGED
ME.

THEY STRIPPED
ME OF MY ROYALTY AND
MY HERITAGE.

THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME JUSTICE TO THEIR DECISION.

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT?

THE AMAZONS BELIEVE IN PEACE THROUGH STRENGTH. TOO OFTEN, I RELIED ON AN OLIVE BRANCH AND NOT A CESTUS...

I ALWAYS ADMIRERD YOUR GENTILITY.

IT DIDN'T GET THE JOB DONE.

YOU DID YOUR BEST.

THEN WHY ISN'T THE WORLD BETTER?

THERE ARE DEGREES...

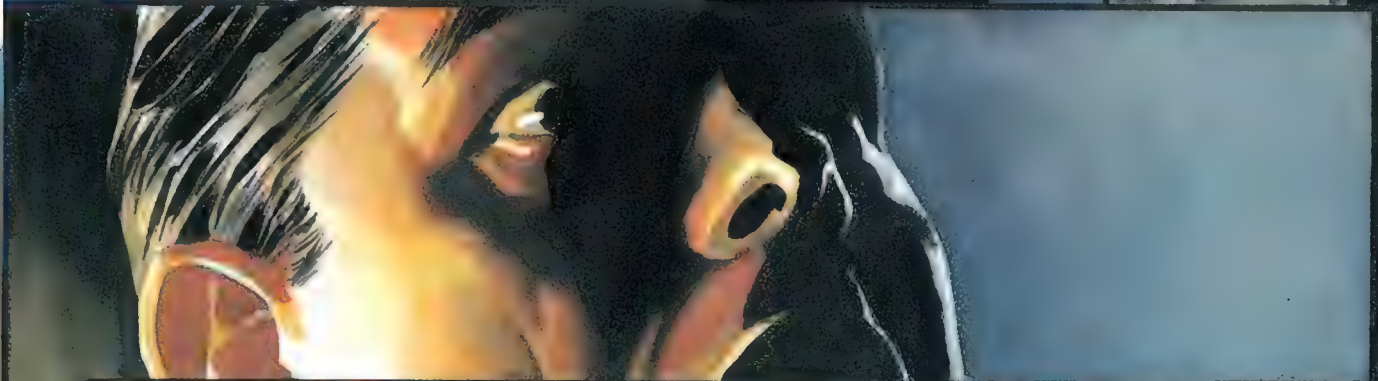
HOW MANY DEGREES WERE YOU INTERESTED IN HEARING ABOUT WHEN YOU RETIRED?

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF ONCE, CLAR--

--KAL. WE ARE WARRIORS. WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO WAGE COMBAT.

GIVEN WHO WE ARE, DIANA... GIVEN THE POWER WE POSSESS... WE HAVE A GREATER OBLIGATION TO KEEP THE PEACE.

ONLY THE WEAK SUCCEMB TO BRUTALITY.



THOSE...
THOSE THINGS NEVER
HAPPENED.

BUT THEY
COULD HAVE. AND
REALLY, THAT'S THE
POINT, ISN'T IT?

SUPERHUMANS
CAN DO ANYTHING
THEY PLEASE.

THEY CAN
MAIM...THEY
CAN KILL...

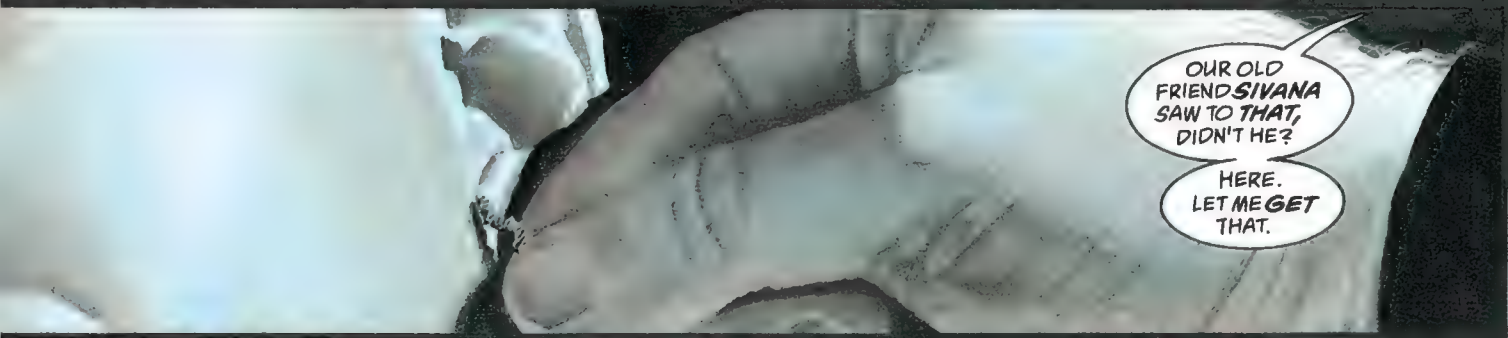
...THEY'VE
MADE THE WORLD
A VERRY UGLY
PLACE.

FORTUNATELY, YOU
DON'T HAVE TO TAKE PART
IN THEIR WORLD, DO YOU?

NO!
NO!

THAT'S
RI-IGHT. ♪

YOU'LL STAY
RIGHT WHERE I
ORDER YOU TO
STAY.

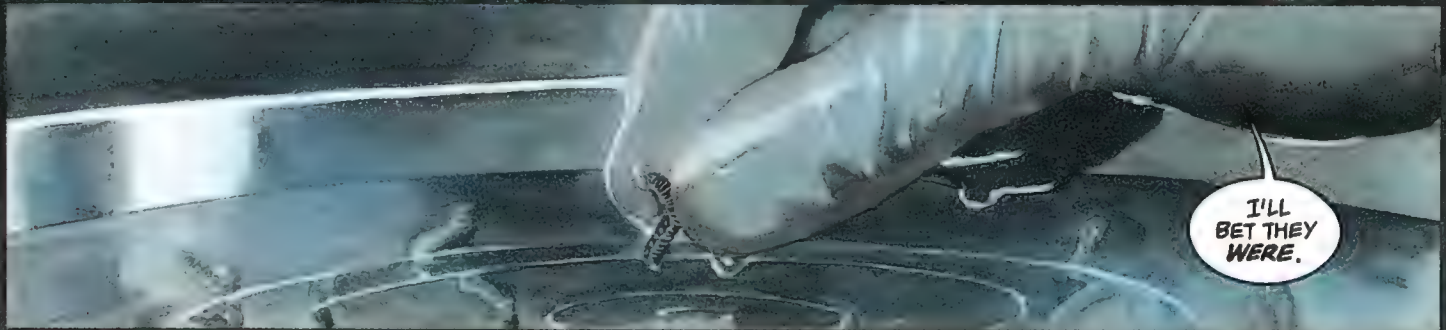


OUR OLD
FRIEND **SIVANA**
SAW TO THAT,
DIDN'T HE?

HERE.
LET ME **GET**
THAT.



INGENIOUS LITTLE
BUGGER, **SIVANA** WAS. DO
YOU SUPPOSE THAT WHEN
THEY COINED THE TERM "**MAD**
SCIENTIST," THEY WERE
THINKING OF HIM?



I'LL
BET THEY
WERE.

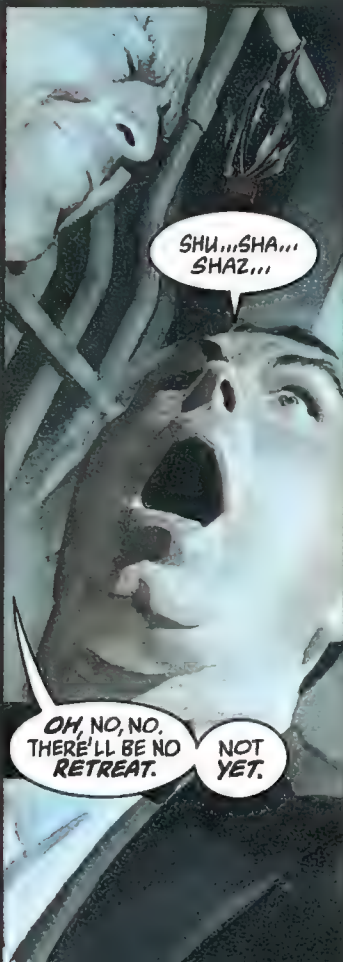


WELL, REST
IN **PEACE**, **SIVANA**.
SCIENCE...

...MARCHES
ON.



THE WORMS
CRAWL IN...THE
WORMS CRAWL
OUT...



SHU...SHA...
SHAZ...

OH, NO, NO.
THERE'LL BE NO
RETREAT. NOT
YET.



I STILL HAVE
A **VERY SPECIAL**
JOB FOR YOU ...



BATMAN!
THERE YOU
ARE!

WELL?
WHAT DO YOU
THINK?

I THINK THAT
YOU AUTHORIZED
TRIPLE SHIFTS
WITHOUT TELLING
ME.



STRENGTH IS IN
NUMBERS. IT TOOK YOU
A LONG TIME, BUT YOU
FINALLY LEARNED THAT.

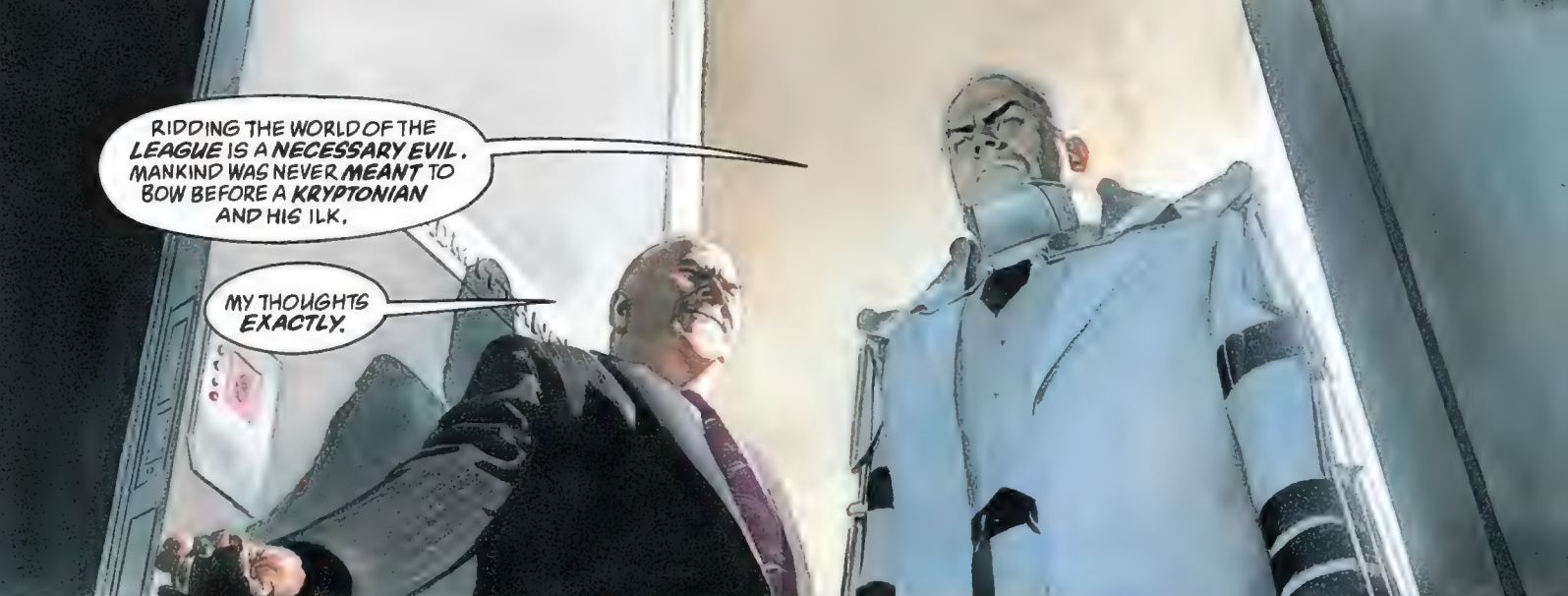
MAGNIFICENT,
AREN'T THEY? BETWEEN
YOUR DESIGN AND MY
PRODUCTION, THE JUSTICE
LEAGUE DOESN'T STAND
A PRAYER OF
SURVIVAL.

SOON, WE WILL
BE ABLE TO CRUSH
THEM WITH AN UN-
YIELDING LEGION OF
STEEL SOLDIERS...

I CAN FEEL YOUR
PULSE THROB FROM HERE,
LUTHOR. DON'T DOUBLE-
CROSS ME.


OUR
OBJECTIVE IS WORLD
ORDER... NOT WORLD
DOMINATION. DON'T
FORGET YOUR
AGENDA.

OH...I
WOULDN'T
DREAM OF
IT.



RIDDING THE WORLD OF THE LEAGUE IS A NECESSARY EVIL. MANKIND WAS NEVER MEANT TO BOW BEFORE A KRYPTONIAN AND HIS ILK.

MY THOUGHTS EXACTLY.



ONCE SUPERMAN AND HIS TOADIES ARE OUT OF THE WAY, THE MANKIND LIBERATION FRONT CAN SEIZE POWER...

... AND WITH YOUR LITTLE ROBOBATS KEEPING THE PEACE, RETURN THE REINS OF CIVILIZATION TO THE HUMANS.



SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN. THEN AGAIN, SO DOES THIS:

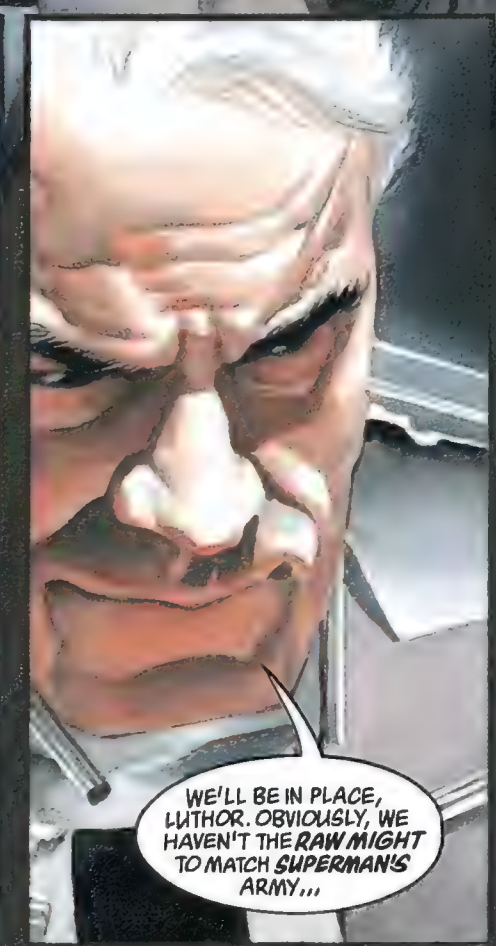
CAN'T WE JUST DROP A K-BOMB ON BIG BLUE'S SPIT-CURL?



SADLY, MR. QUEEN, KRYPTONITE NO LONGER PACKS THE PUNCH IT DID IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS... AS I LEARNED THE HARD WAY.

CHALK IT UP TO THE SOLAR RADIATION SUPERMAN'S CELLS HAVE BEEN GUZZLING ALL THESE YEARS. HE'S AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS INVULNERABILITY.

ONCE WAR BEGINS, BATMAN, CAN YOUR PLAYERS ADVANCE TO THE FRONT LINES IF NECESSARY?



WE'LL BE IN PLACE, LUTHOR. OBVIOUSLY, WE HAVEN'T THE RAW MIGHT TO MATCH SUPERMAN'S ARMY...



... BUT WE HAVE
THE FIRE OF YOUTH ON
OUR SIDE.

THE SONS AND
DAUGHTERS OF MANY
OF THE LEAGUERS HAVE
COME TO LEND THEIR
SUPPORT.



AND THEY'RE
PREPARED TO FIGHT
TOOTH AND NAIL WITH
THE GENERATION THAT
SINED THEM?

AREN'T ALL
YOUNG PEOPLE,
SON?

THEY'RE PREPARED
TO STRIKE WHEN I GIVE
THE SIGNAL.



I ASSUME
YOUR TACTICAL
STRATEGY SOME-
HOW INVOLVES THE
GULAG?

WHY...
WHY,
YES...

DETAILS?

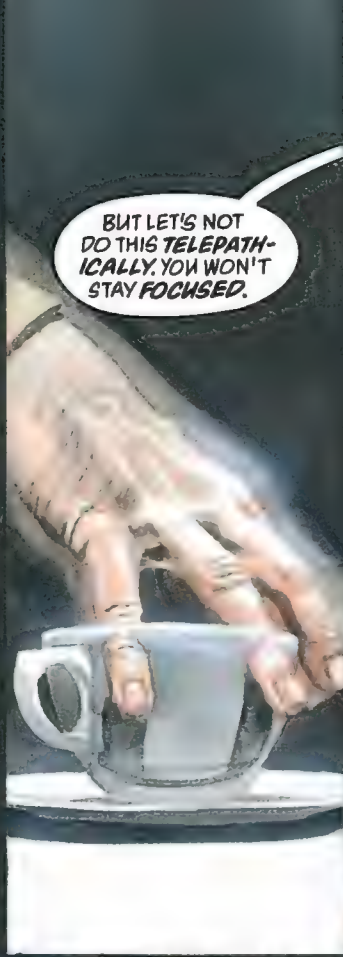
...

SOON ENOUGH. IN
FACT, I'M AWAITING WORD
MYSELF. NOW, IF YOU'LL
EXCUSE ME...



I KNOW
WHAT YOU'RE
THINKING.
I DO!

I'M AWARE
OF THAT, OLD
FRIEND.



BUT LET'S NOT
DO THIS TELEPATH-
ICALLY. YOU WON'T
STAY FOCUSED.



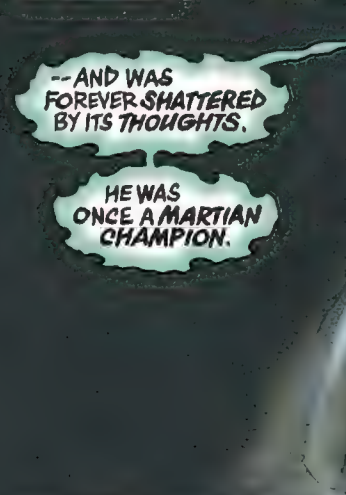
TALK
TO ME.

JUST
RELAX...AND
TALK.



WHO...?

IN THIS FORM? AN
EVERYMAN. SOMEONE
WHO SO DESPERATELY
LONGED TO UNDERSTAND
THE HUMAN PSYCHE THAT
HE FINALLY, IN ONE TERRI-
BLE MOMENT, OPENED
HIS MIND TO THE
WORLD--

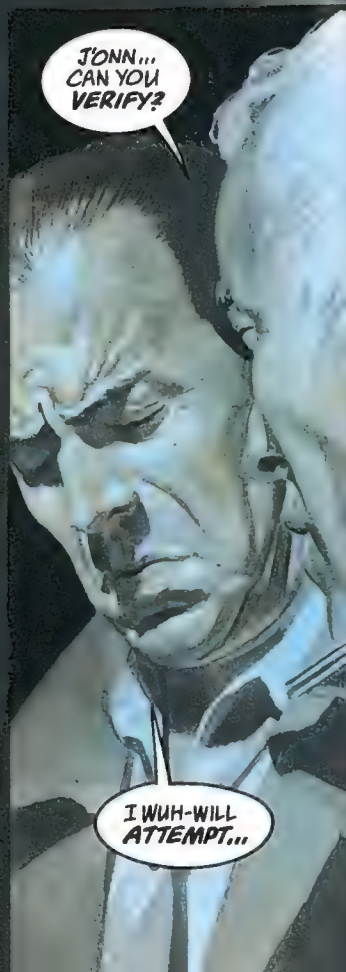


--AND WAS
FOREVER SHATTERED
BY ITS THOUGHTS.

HE WAS
ONCE A MARTIAN
CHAMPION.



NOW HE
IS NOT MUCH OF
ANYTHING.



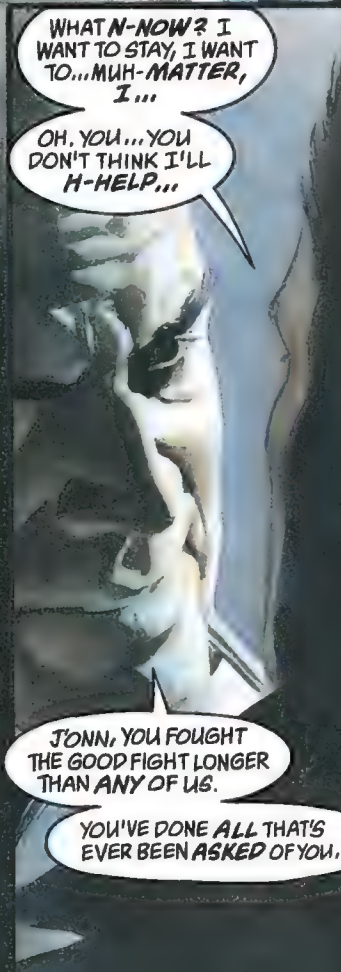
J'ONN...
CAN YOU
VERIFY?

I WUH-WILL
ATTEMPT...



TOO MUCH
NOISE! TOO
MUCH--

SHH.
SHH. IT'S
OKAY.



WHAT N-NOW? I
WANT TO STAY, I WANT
TO...MUH-MATTER,
I...

OH, YOU...YOU
DON'T THINK I'LL
H-HELP...

J'ONN, YOU FOUGHT
THE GOOD FIGHT LONGER
THAN ANY OF US.


YOU'VE DONE ALL THAT'S
EVER BEEN ASKED OF YOU...



...AND TODAY WAS
NO EXCEPTION.

YOU'VE PAID
YOUR DUES, OLD FRIEND.
GO HOME AND REST.

DREAM OF RED
SANDS AND SILENT
STARS.

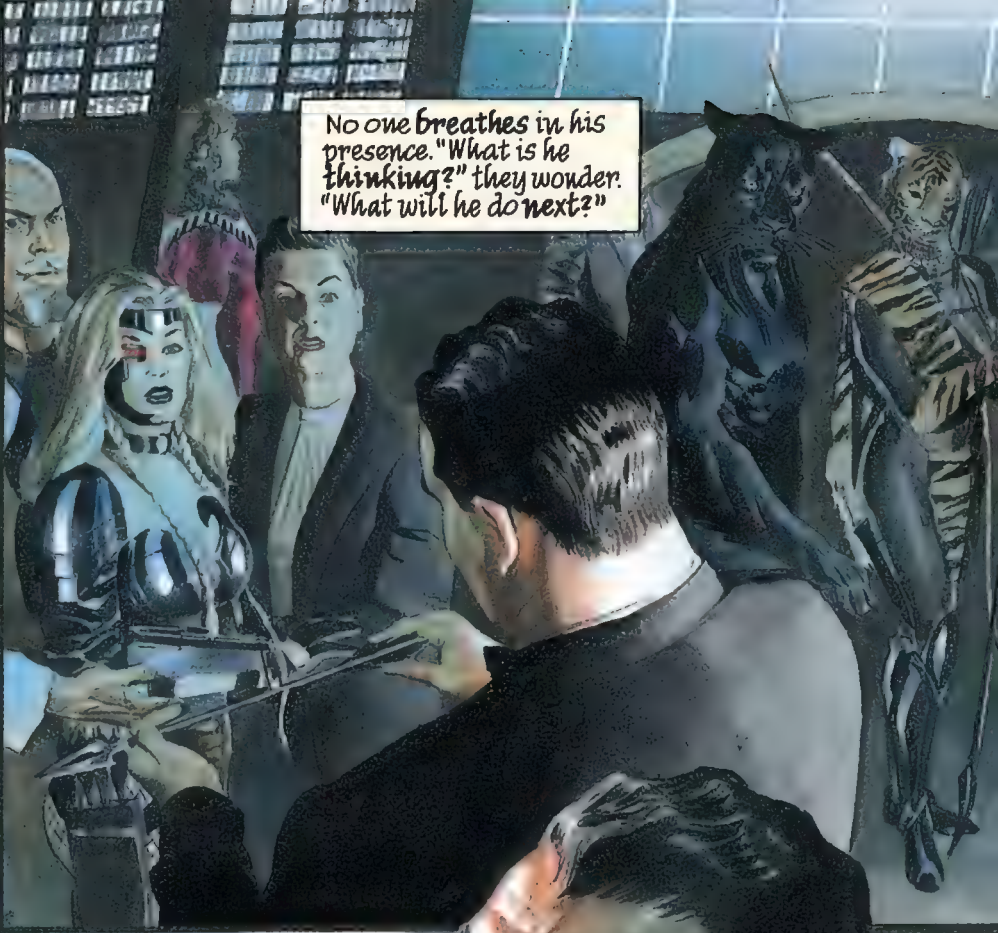


Captain Marvel mills about, his eerie grin carving a swath through Batman's ranks.


MAY I...?

OH!


I MEAN... SURE. HELP... HELP YOURSELF...




No one breathes in his presence. "What is he thinking?" they wonder. "What will he do next?"




To them, he is a shark trawling for prawn.



I have heard him called the world's mightiest mortal.



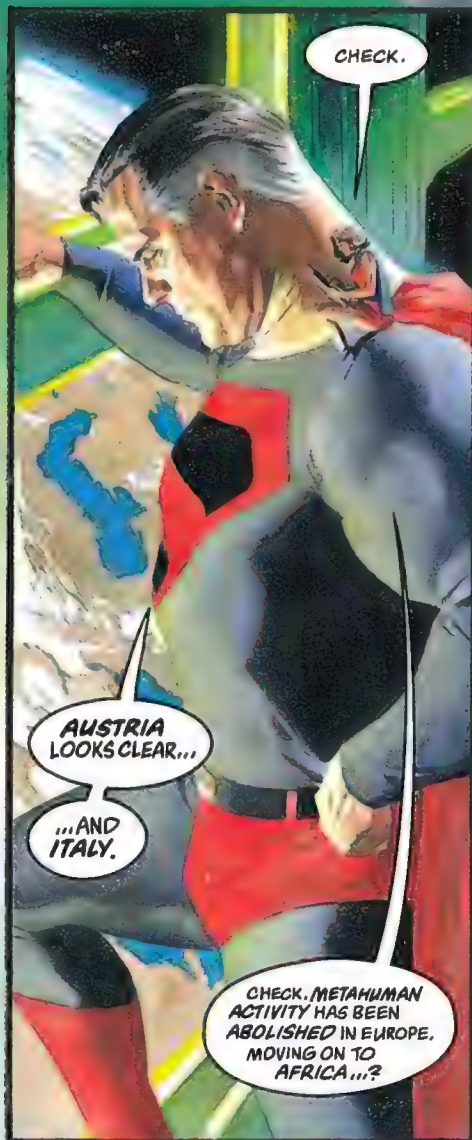
No doubt. The intimidation his mere presence exudes is uncanny.



Clearly, these heroes regard him with a growing unease accorded only one other.



GERMANY IS
ALL CLEAR.

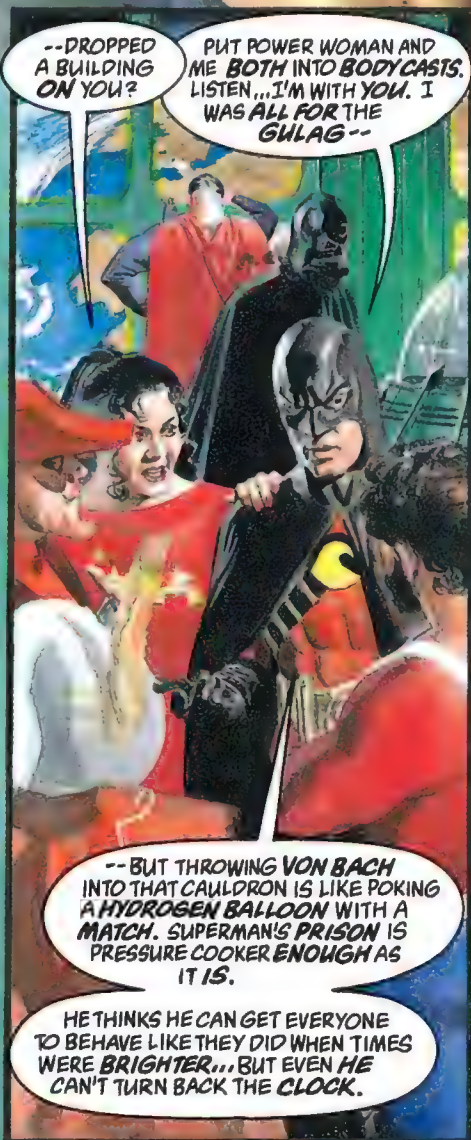


CHECK.

AUSTRIA
LOOKS CLEAR...

...AND
ITALY.

CHECK. METAHUMAN
ACTIVITY HAS BEEN
ABOLISHED IN EUROPE.
MOVING ON TO
AFRICA...?



--DROPPED
A BUILDING
ON YOU?

PUT POWER WOMAN AND
ME BOTH INTO BODYCASTS.
LISTEN...I'M WITH YOU. I
WAS ALL FOR THE
GULAG--

-- BUT THROWING VON BACH
INTO THAT CAULDRON IS LIKE POKING
A HYDROGEN BALLOON WITH A
MATCH. SUPERMAN'S PRISON IS
PRESSURE COOKER ENOUGH AS
IT IS.

HE THINKS HE CAN GET EVERYONE
TO BEHAVE LIKE THEY DID WHEN TIMES
WERE BRIGHTER... BUT EVEN HE
CAN'T TURN BACK THE CLOCK.



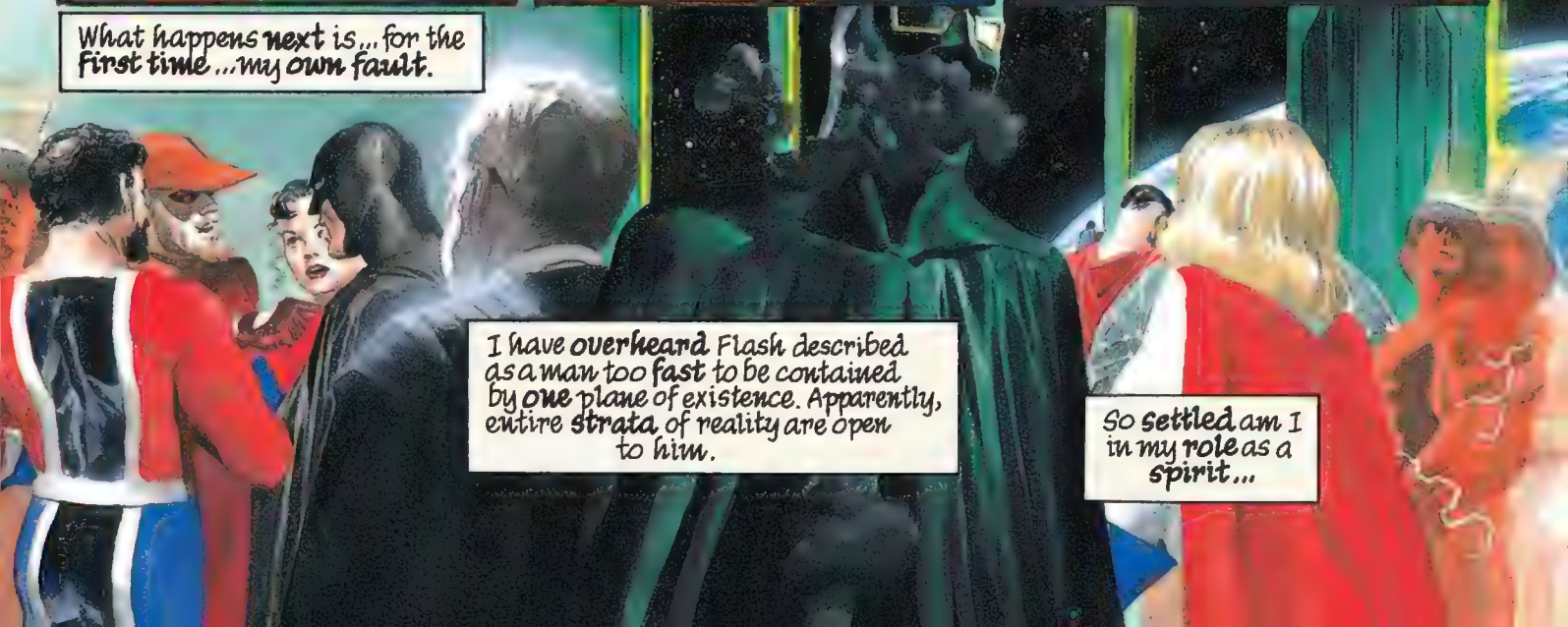
SO
TELL
HIM.

ME?
ROY, YOU
TELL HIM!

LOOK AT
HIM! CAN'T A
MAN WITH
TELESCOPIC
VISION SEE
THE WORLD
AROUND
HIM?

SHH! HE
CAN HEAR
YOU!

What happens next is... for the
first time... my own fault.



I have overheard Flash described
as a man too fast to be contained
by one plane of existence. Apparently,
entire strata of reality are open
to him.

So settled am I
in my role as a
spirit...



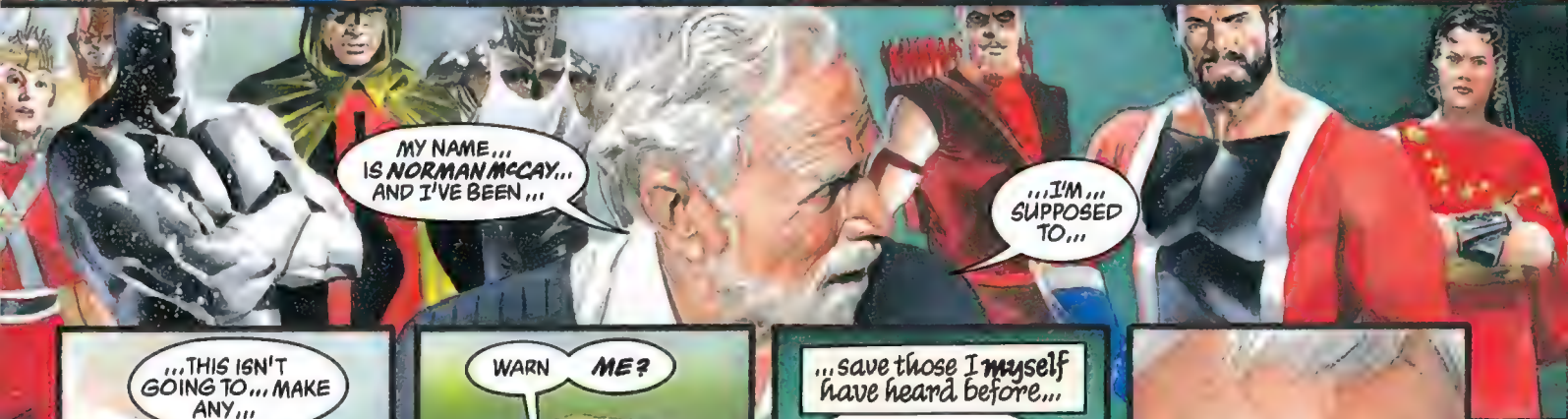
...that I have forgotten that fact!

WHO ARE YOU? WHERE DID YOU COME FROM?

ANSWER ME, DAMN IT!

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

WELL...?



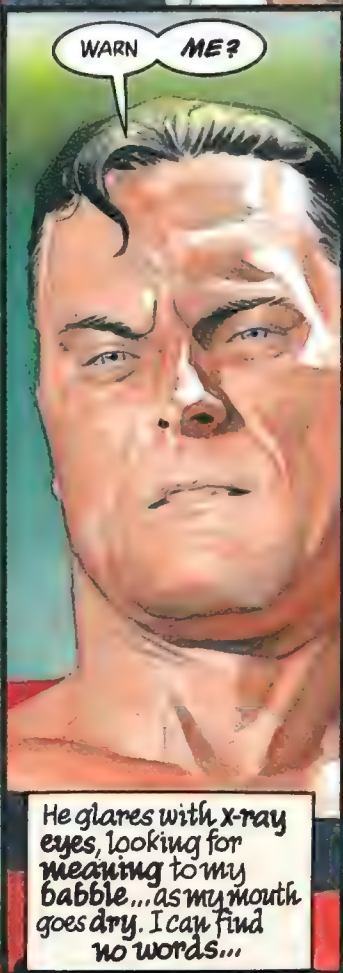
MY NAME...
IS NORMAN MCCAY...
AND I'VE BEEN...

...I'M...
SUPPOSED
TO...



...THIS ISN'T
GOING TO... MAKE
ANY...

PLEASE
UNDERSTAND! A
CATASTROPHE
COMES! I SEE
ARMIES RAISED
AGAINST YOU! I
WARN YOU--



WARN ME?

He glares with x-ray
eyes, looking for
meaning to my
babble... as my mouth
goes dry. I can find
no words...



...save those I myself
have heard before...

"...AND... THE THIRD
PART... OF THE TREES
WAS BURNT UP..."

"... AND ALL
GREEN GRASS... WAS
BURNT UP..."

"...AND THE
SUN AND THE AIR
WERE DARKENED."

"FEAR GOD--
AND GIVE GLORY
TO HIM--"



"--FOR THE HOUR
OF HIS JUDGMENT
IS COME."



LISTEN TO ME.
I DON'T KNOW WHO
YOU ARE... OR WHERE
YOU'VE COME FROM...
BUT YOUR WORDS
ARE MEANING-
LESS.

ARMAGEDDON IS
HARDLY ON OUR
CALENDAR. THESE
ARE GRIM DAYS...
BUT WE HAVE MATTERS
FULLY UNDER--

HOLY
GOD!



WORD JUST
CAME IN FROM THE
GULAG! THERE'S
A RIOT GOING
ON!

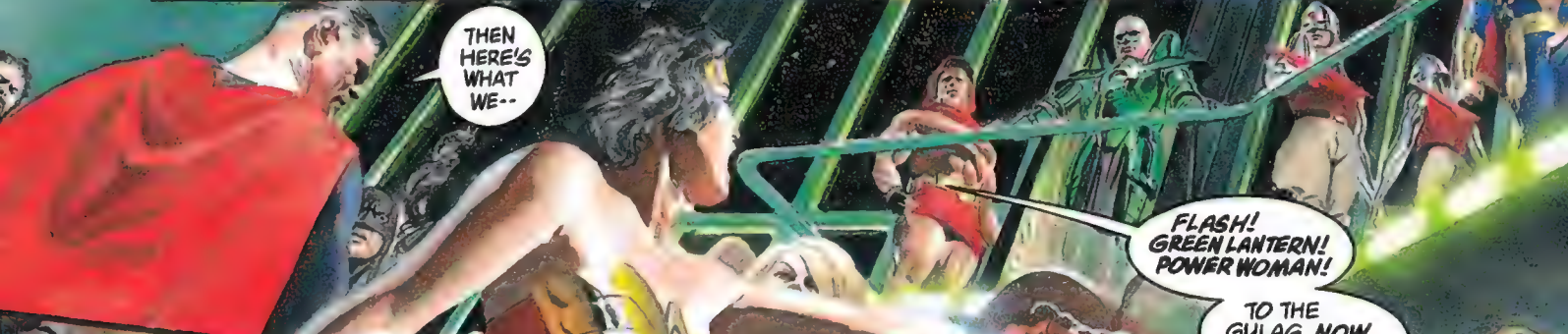
THE
PRISONERS
HAVE GONE
BERSERK!



THEN
HERE'S
WHAT
WE--


FLASH!
GREEN LANTERN!
POWER WOMAN!

TO THE
GULAG. NOW.
TAKE CONTROL--




THROUGH
PEACEFUL
MEANS--

-- BY WHATEVER
MEANS NECESSARY.



I WANT A STATUS
REPORT AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE.

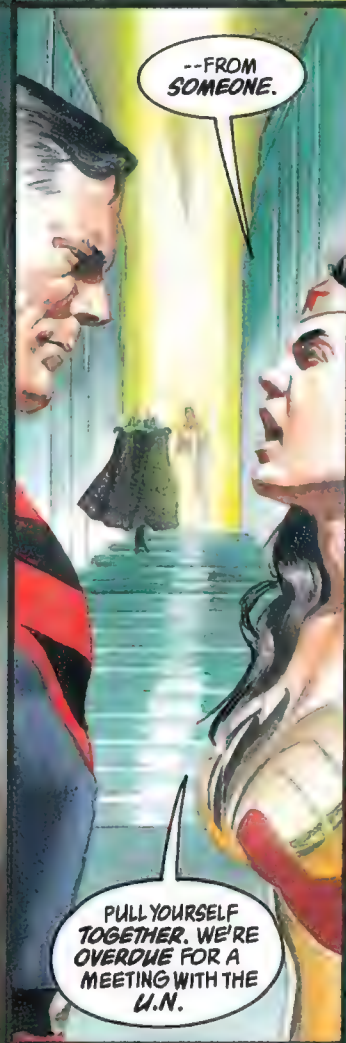
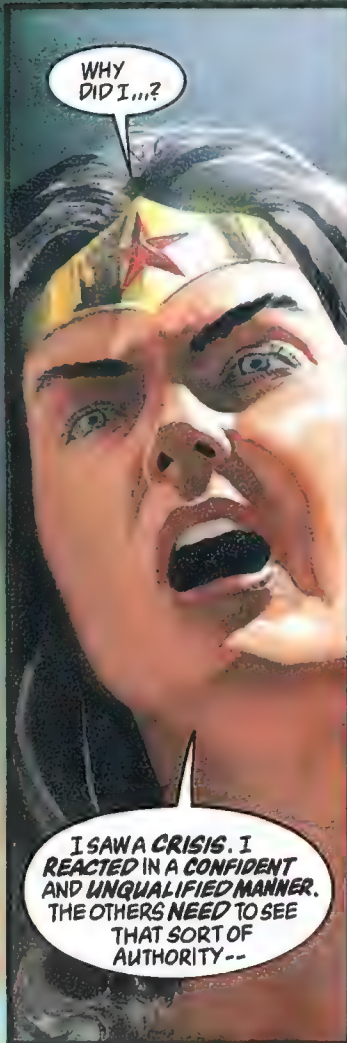


RAY--
PHOEBUS--BE
READY TO
FOLLOW IF
CALLED...



YOU ARE
FINISHED
HERE.

NO. NOT
QUITE...

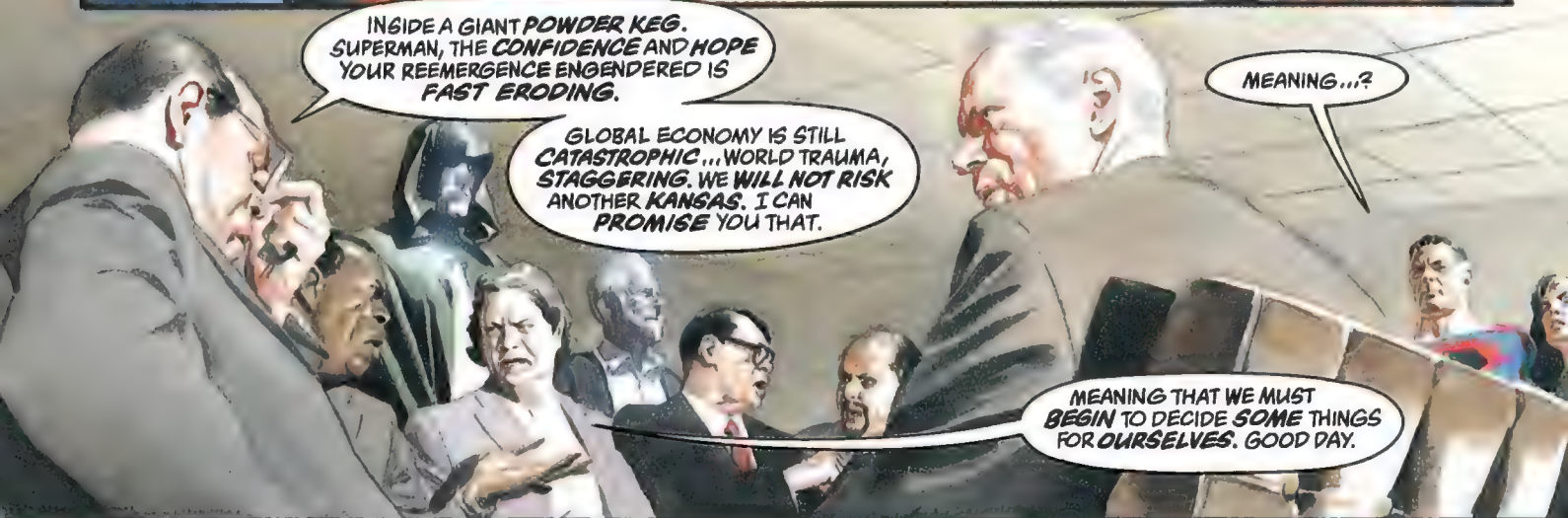




NOT ENTIRELY.

THE GULAG IS A WORK IN PROGRESS. THE LEAGUE MUST FIND A WAY TO GUIDE THOSE WHO INSIST UPON WORKING AGAINST THE COMMON GOOD.

I ADMIT TO SOME DANGER... BUT I CHOSE TO PUT THE RENEGADES TOGETHER WHERE WE CAN MONITOR THEM AND TEACH THEM.



INSIDE A GIANT POWDER KEG. SUPERMAN, THE CONFIDENCE AND HOPE YOUR REEMERGENCE ENGENDERED IS FAST ERODING.

GLOBAL ECONOMY IS STILL CATASTROPHIC... WORLD TRAUMA, STAGGERING. WE WILL NOT RISK ANOTHER KANSAS. I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT.

MEANING...?

MEANING THAT WE MUST BEGIN TO DECIDE SOME THINGS FOR OURSELVES. GOOD DAY.



STOP LOOKING SO STUNNED. DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THEY'LL SIT BACK AND LET US SOLVE THE PROBLEM AT OUR LEISURE?

THEY'RE SCARED... AND THEIR FEARS MAY SOON TRUMP OUR SOLUTIONS. WE HAVE TO ACT.

KAL, WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT, YOU'RE A WORLD LEADER... AND THE LEAGUE IS GETTING TIRED OF WAITING FOR YOU TO ADJUST TO THAT ROLE.

AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, IF THE SITUATION WITH THE GULAG PRISONERS GETS ONE MICRON WORSE...

...THE LEAGUE WILL BE FORCED TO TAKE A FINAL, DECISIVE ACTION...



GOOD NEWS!

THE MOMENT HAS COME TO BEGIN OUR FINAL STRIKE! THE GULAG IS IN TURMOIL! THE INMATES ARE...

...DARE I SAY IT?...

...REVOLTING!

SUPERMAN'S PRISON HAS BECOME A CAULDRON OF HATE AND CHAOS! THAT'S OUR CUE TO DEPLOY OUR STEEL LEGION--

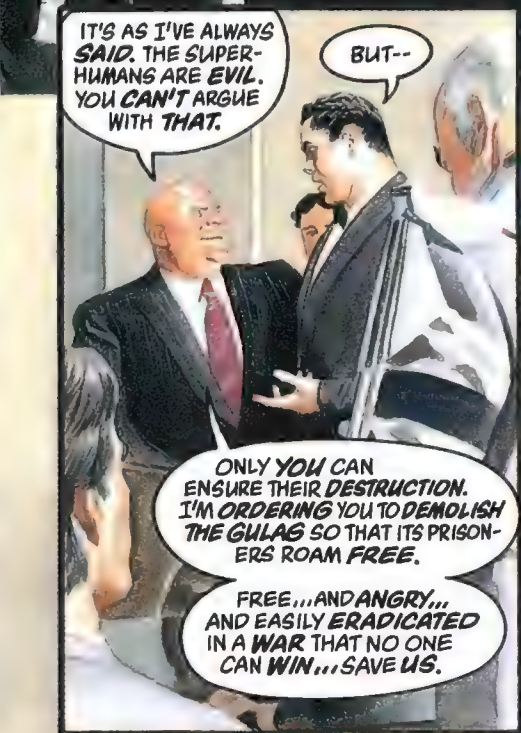


-- BUT NOT BEFORE SOMEONE TIPS THAT SCALDING CAULDRON RIGHT ONTO THE JUSTICE LEAGUE!

SOMEONE I'VE BEEN SAVING FOR JUST SUCH A TASK!

?

ME? BUT-- BUT ALL OUR TALKS--

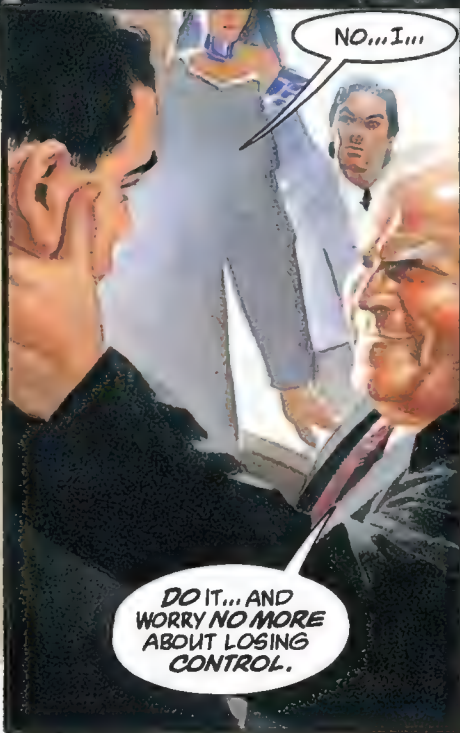


IT'S AS I'VE ALWAYS SAID. THE SUPER-HUMANS ARE EVIL. YOU CAN'T ARGUE WITH THAT.

BUT--

ONLY YOU CAN ENSURE THEIR DESTRUCTION. I'M ORDERING YOU TO DEMOLISH THE GULAGS SO THAT ITS PRISONERS ROAM FREE.

FREE...AND ANGRY... AND EASILY ERADICATED IN A WAR THAT NO ONE CAN WIN... SAVE US.



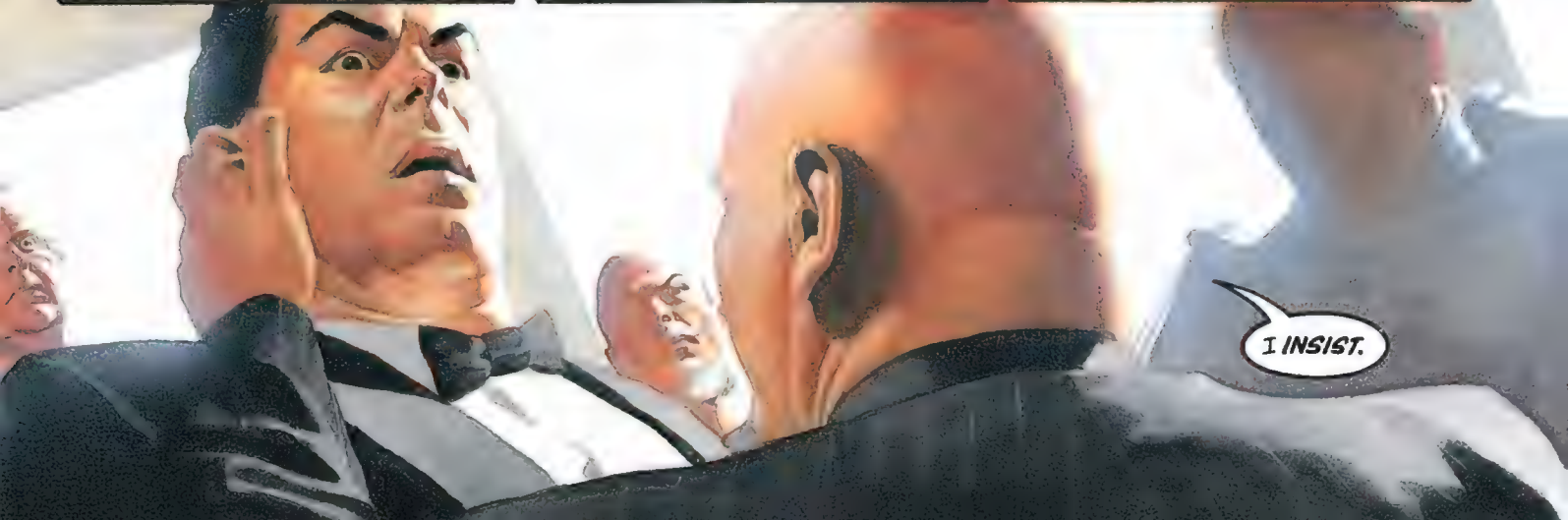
NO... I...

DO IT... AND WORRY NO MORE ABOUT LOSING CONTROL.



YOU WON'T. I'VE SEEN TO THAT. GO AHEAD.

TUMBLE DOWN THE WALLS OF JERICO.



I INSIST.

THWAM!

HELLO,
BILLY,

SHUH...
SSH...

≠kaff≠

HE--HE'S
NOT--?

YOU'RE KIDDING ME!
ALL THIS TIME, WE'VE BEEN
IN MORTAL FEAR OF
BILLY BATSON?

I'D SUSPECTED IT FOR A
WHILE... AND J'ONN'S TELEPATHIC
PROBE CONFIRMED IT. IT SEEMS
MARVEL'S DUAL IDENTITIES ARE
IN QUITE A BIT OF MENTAL
CONFLICT.

ALL THESE YEARS... AS
BATSON GREW TO MANHOOD...
LUTHOR KEPT HIM IN CHECK BY
TURNING HIM INTO A STEW
OF SCHIZOPHRENIC
PSYCHOSES.

B-BUT
...OUR
GOALS...

MY ONLY GOAL IN
ALLYING WITH YOU WAS TO
LEARN YOUR CONNECTION
TO CAPTAIN MARVEL. IN
THIS ENTIRE GLOBAL
CONFLICT, HE WAS THE
WILD CARD...

... AND I HATE
WILD CARDS.

YOU--YOU
DOUBLE-CROSSED
ME!

I LEARNED
FROM YOU.



THEN MAY WE ASSUME YOU'VE GIVEN THE SIGNAL?

ABSOLUTELY.



STRIKE.



TED! FOLLOW LUTHOR!

DON'T LET HIM GET--



NNNNNGH!



AHUH!

AHUH!

AHUH!



KLIK



WHAT THE---?

NO!

NOOOOO---*



BILLY STOP!

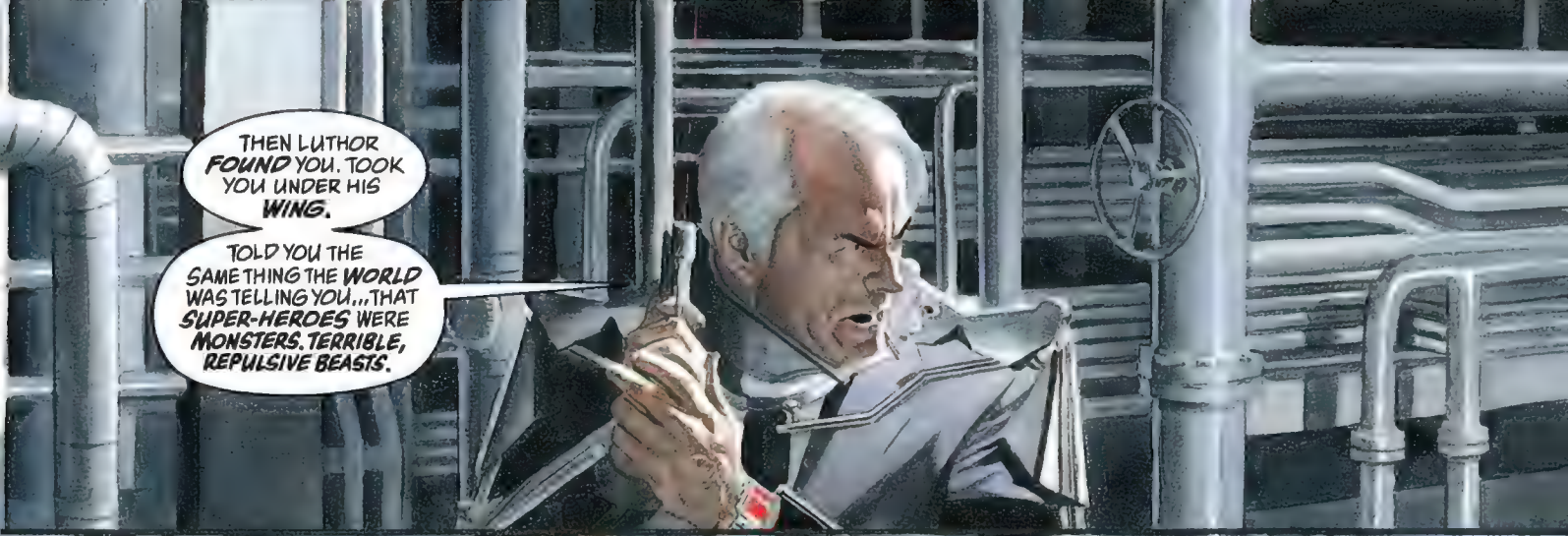
YOU DON'T HAVE TO RUN ANYMORE! I FIGURED OUT WHAT LUTHOR DID TO YOU!

CAPTAIN MARVEL RETIRED EARLY, DIDN'T HE, BILLY? OF ALL OF US, HE HAD THE HARDEST TIME ADAPTING TO THE GRIM NEW WORLD AROUND HIM.




ONE SAD DAY, HE SPOKE HIS MAGIC WORD FOR THE LAST TIME...

...AND VANISHED INSIDE A SCARED LITTLE BOY.




THEN LUTHOR
FOUND YOU. TOOK
YOU UNDER HIS
WING.

TOLD YOU THE
SAME THING THE WORLD
WAS TELLING YOU... THAT
SUPER-HEROES WERE
MONSTERS. TERRIBLE,
REPULSIVE BEASTS.




AND HE NEVER,
EVER LET YOU FORGET...
THAT YOU HAD ONE HIDING
DEEP DOWN INSIDE
YOU.



DON'T THINK LIKE
THAT, BILLY! HE'S TWISTED
YOUR BRAIN AROUND THAT
INSANITY! THE **WORMS**...
THEY'RE ENGINEERED
TO SECRETE CERTAIN
CHEMICALS!

BILLY OR MARVEL--
EITHER ONE... THEY
EAT AWAY AT YOUR
MIND!



THEY'RE DRIVING
YOU MAD, BILLY! DON'T
LET THAT HAPPEN! THE
WORLD DEPENDS ON
IT! YOU CAN FIGHT--

**BILLY,
LOOK
OUT!**



KRAASH!



AAAAAAH...

BILLY, NO!
STAY CALM! I
CAN HELP!

**STAY
CALM!**



AAAAAA...

SHA...

SHAZAM!

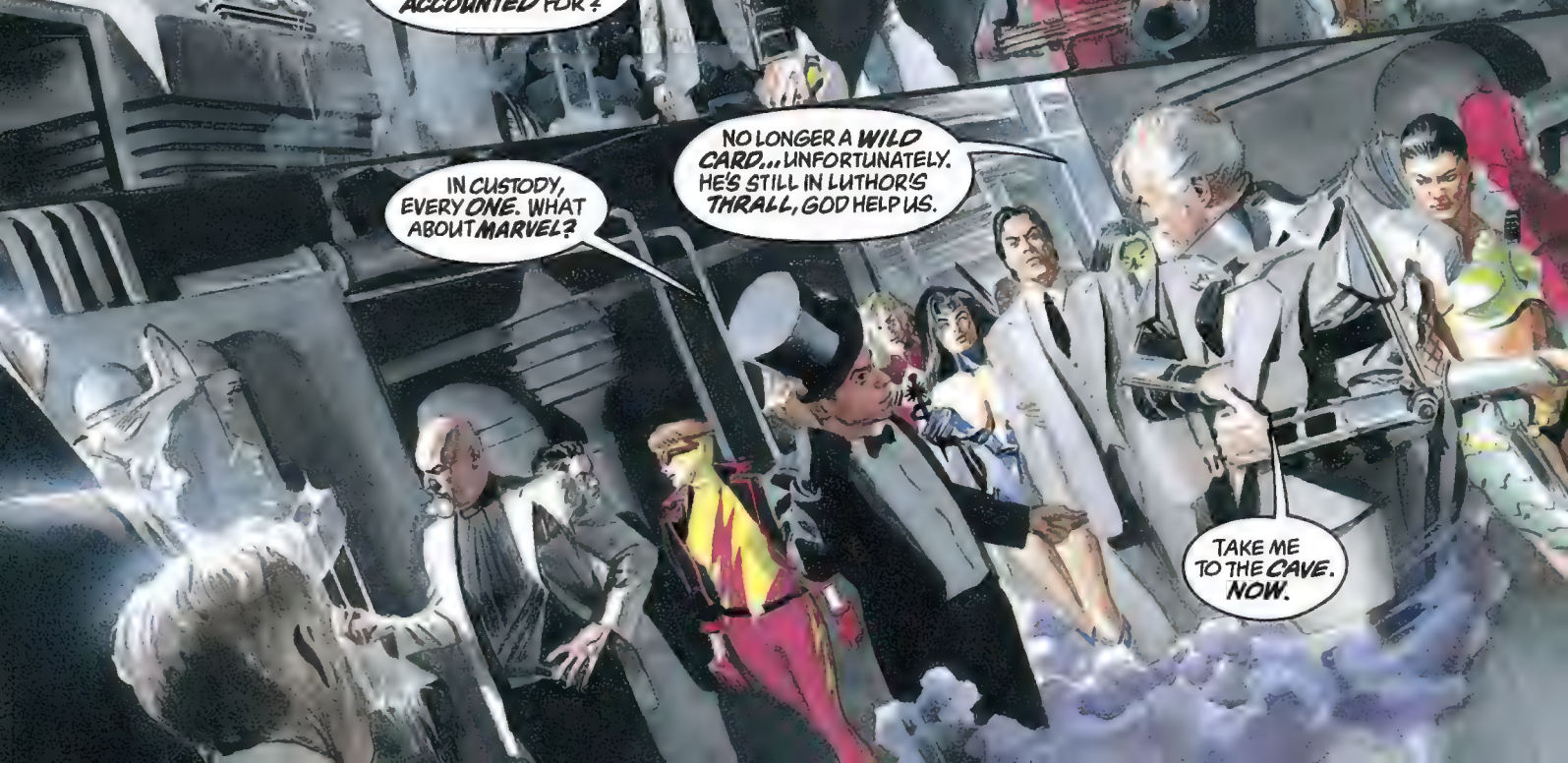


DAMN
IT.



BATMAN!
ARE YOU ALL
RIGHT?

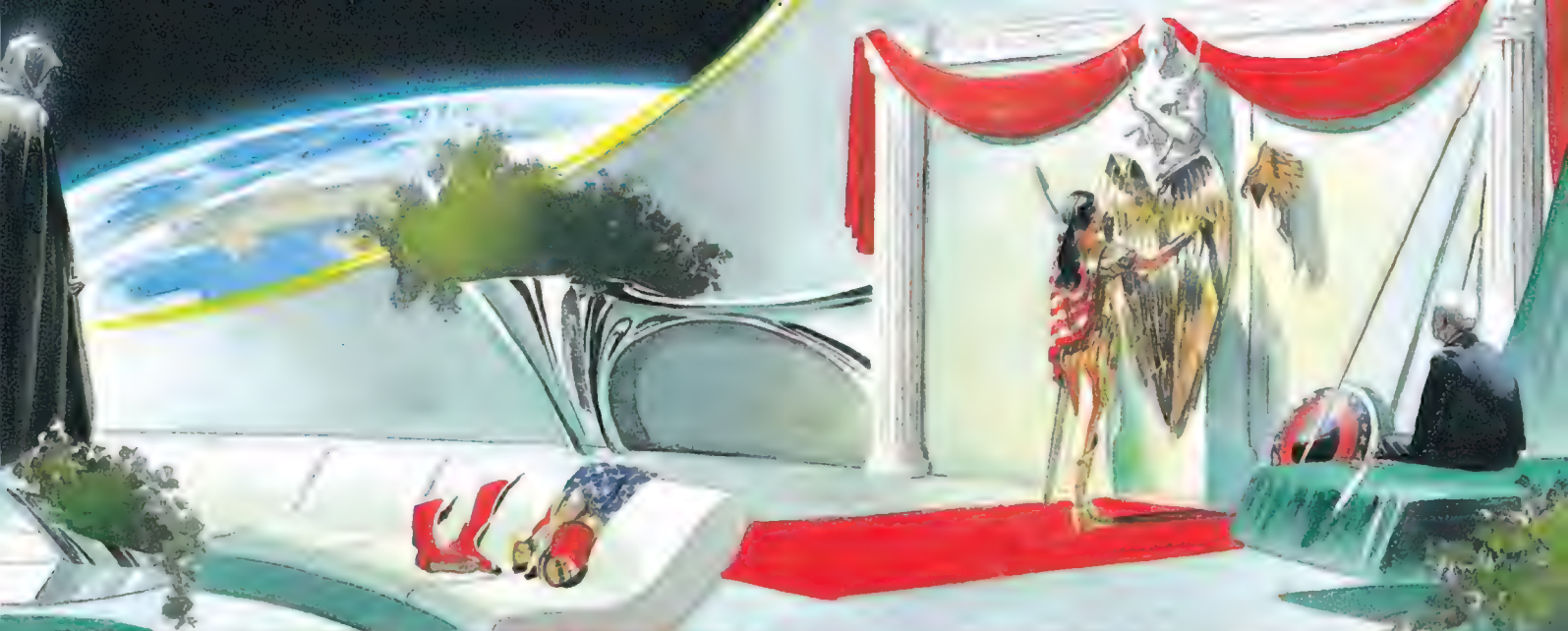
FOR THE MOMENT.
WHAT ABOUT LUTHOR
AND HIS MEN? ARE THEY
ACCOUNTED FOR?



NO LONGER A WILD
CARD... UNFORTUNATELY.
HE'S STILL IN LUTHOR'S
THRALL, GOD HELP US.

IN CUSTODY,
EVERY ONE. WHAT
ABOUT MARVEL?

TAKE ME
TO THE CAVE.
NOW.



YET ANOTHER SIDE OF YOU I'M NOT COMFORTABLE WITH.

GET USED TO THIS ONE.

A SOLDIER UNPREPARED HAS NO BUSINESS CALLING HERSELF A SOLDIER.

MORE AMAZONIAN "WISDOM."

ISN'T IT POSSIBLE THAT WE'VE ALREADY WON THE BIG FIGHT? ONCE THE RIOTERS ARE CALMED, WE CAN INSTILL--

OW!

YOU ALWAYS WERE A BIT VULNERABLE TO MAGIC.

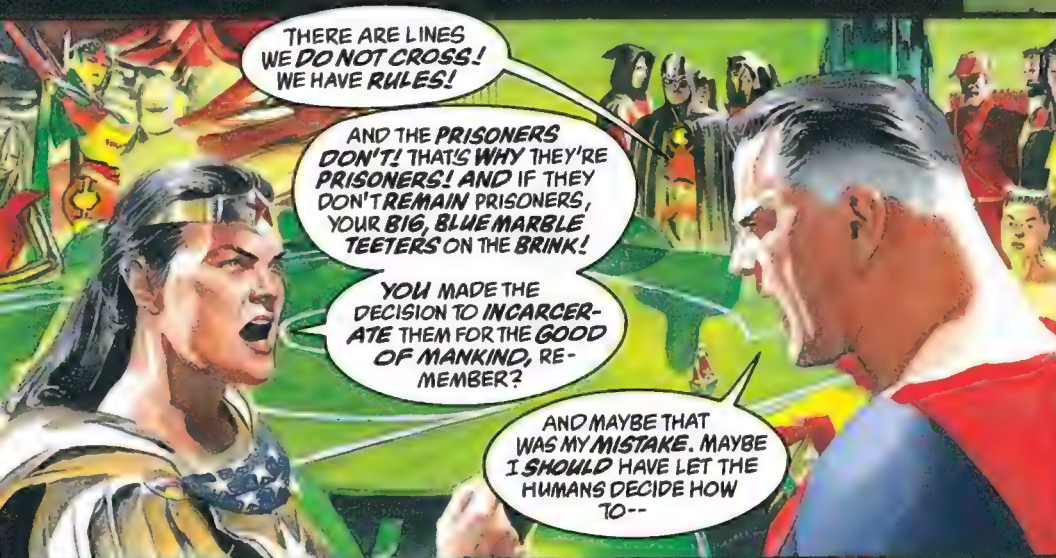
BE CAREFUL. THE SWORD WAS A GIFT FROM HEPHAESTUS. IT CAN CARVE THE ELECTRONS OFF AN ATOM.

AND YOU EXPECT TO USE IT?

I EXPECT TO BE A SOLDIER.

I WILL NOT SANCTION LETHAL FORCE AGAINST THE RIOTERS. I'M UNEASY WITH THE BLADE.

NOT ALL OF US HAVE HEAT VISION.



THERE ARE LINES
WE DO NOT CROSS!
WE HAVE RULES!

AND THE PRISONERS
DON'T! THAT'S WHY THEY'RE
PRISONERS! AND IF THEY
DON'T REMAIN PRISONERS,
YOUR BIG, BLUE MARBLE
TEETERS ON THE BRINK!

YOU MADE THE
DECISION TO INCARCER-
ATE THEM FOR THE GOOD
OF MANKIND, RE-
MEMBER?

AND MAYBE THAT
WAS MY MISTAKE. MAYBE
I SHOULD HAVE LET THE
HUMANS DECIDE HOW
TO--

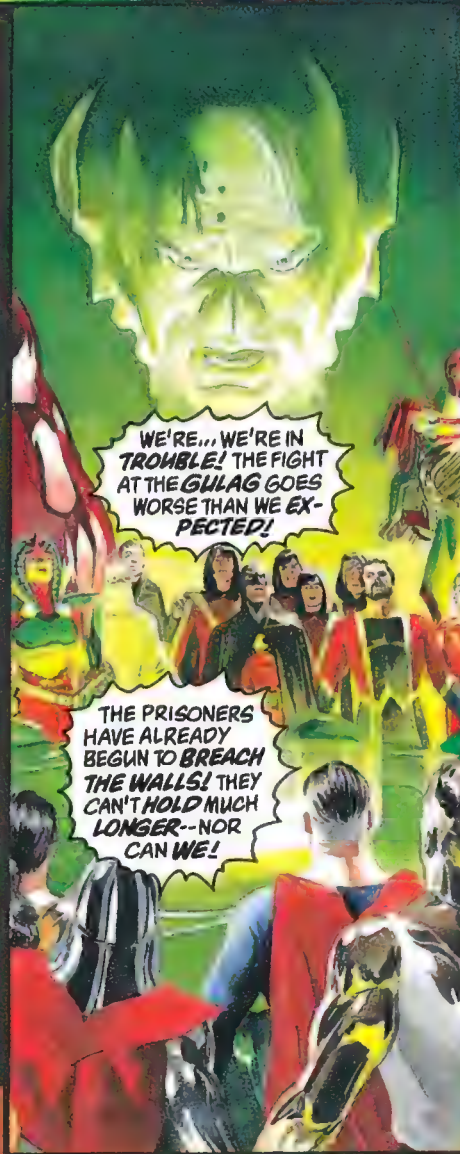


--HEAR
ME? SEND
HELP!

>koff<

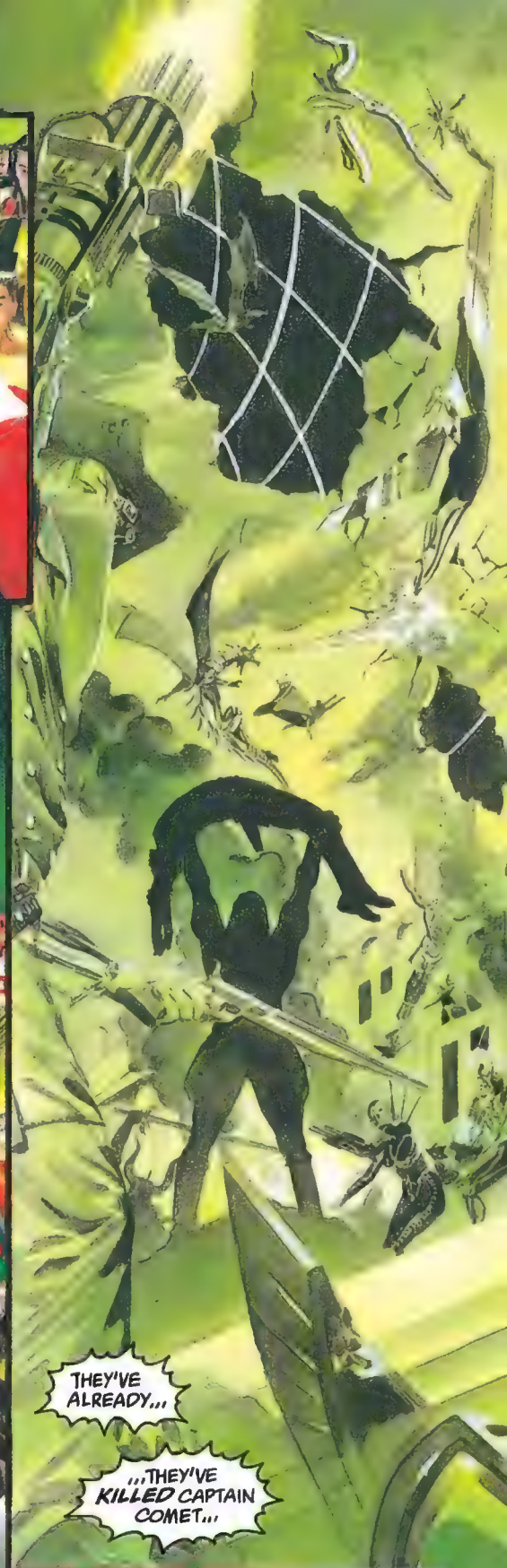
FOR GOD'S
SAKE, CAN
YOU HEAR
ME?

GL?



WE'RE... WE'RE IN
TROUBLE! THE FIGHT
AT THE GULAG GOES
WORSE THAN WE EX-
PECTED!

THE PRISONERS
HAVE ALREADY
BEGUN TO BREACH
THE WALLS! THEY
CAN'T HOLD MUCH
LONGER--NOR
CAN WE!



THEY'VE
ALREADY...

...THEY'VE
KILLED CAPTAIN
COMET...



NO!

THWAM!



COMET...
GONE... JUST
LIKE THAT...

HOW
COULD
THEY...?

SO... YOUR WORLD'S FINALLY
TURNED COMPLETELY TOPSY-TURVY.
HOW DO WE HANDLE THIS?

I... DON'T
KNOW.

THEN
I DO.

WE'RE GOING TO
CONFRONT THE PRISONERS
AND GIVE THEM AN ULTI-
MATUM. THEY MUST
SURRENDER.



AND
IF THEY
REFUSE
?

THEN IT'S
WAR.

BUT YOU CAN'T
HAVE A WAR WITHOUT
PEOPLE DYING.



Her lips brush
his with the
sound of marble
scraping steel.

It is a kiss
completely
devoid of
passion.



It is a final
farewell.





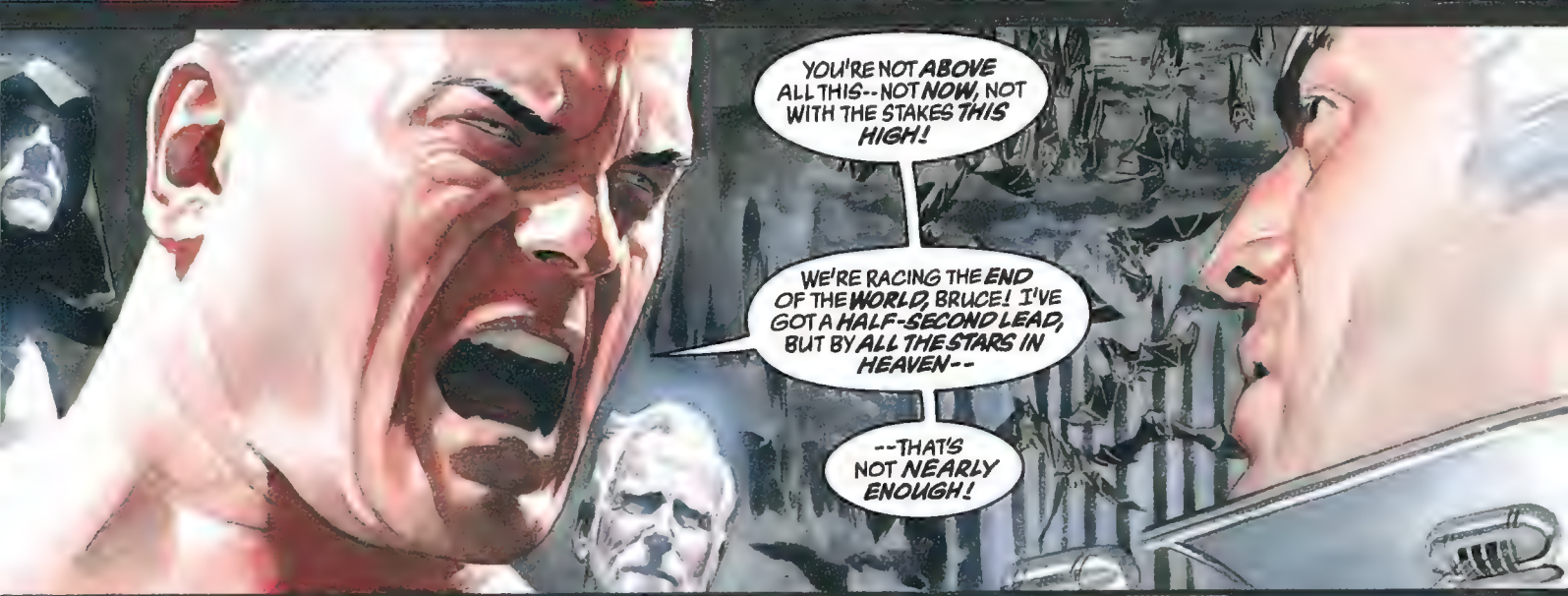


I
NEED YOUR
HELP.

WE'VE BEEN
THROUGH THIS
ALREADY...



SHUT UP! I
DON'T HAVE TIME
FOR YOUR HOLIER-
THAN-THOU
CRACKS!



YOU'RE NOT ABOVE
ALL THIS-- NOT NOW, NOT
WITH THE STAKES THIS
HIGH!

WE'RE RACING THE END
OF THE WORLD, BRUCE! I'VE
GOT A HALF-SECOND LEAD,
BUT BY ALL THE STARS IN
HEAVEN--

--THAT'S
NOT NEARLY
ENOUGH!



THE
GULAG'S
READY TO
BLOW.

YES! EVEN AS WE
SPEAK, WONDER WOMAN
AND THE LEAGUE STAND
OUTSIDE ITS WALLS--

"-- READY TO BRING THEM
DOWN AROUND EVERYONE
INSIDE!"

ATTENTION!
THIS WILL BE YOUR
ONLY WARNING!

ABANDON
YOUR ACTIVITIES AND
SURRENDER--

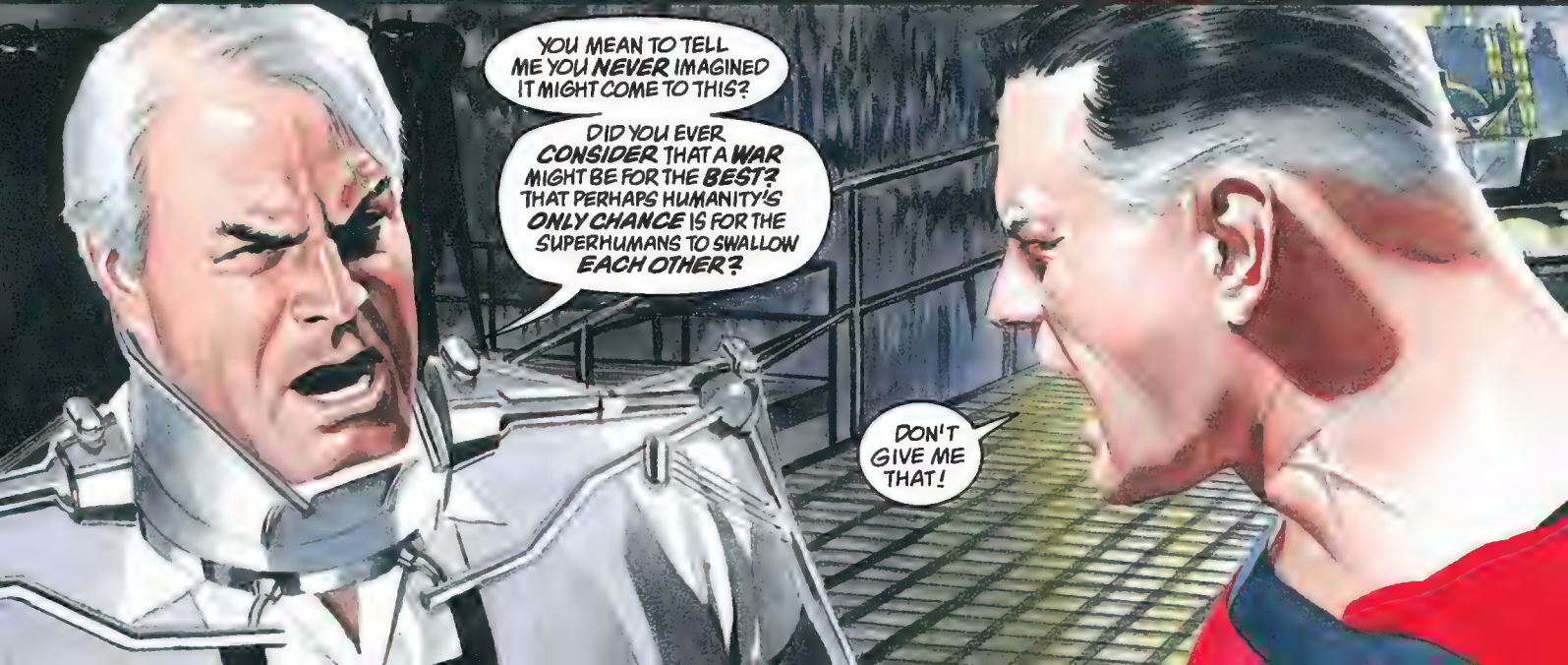
--OR FACE THE
CONSEQUENCES!



YOU MEAN TO TELL
ME YOU NEVER IMAGINED
IT MIGHT COME TO THIS?

DID YOU EVER
CONSIDER THAT A WAR
MIGHT BE FOR THE BEST?
THAT PERHAPS HUMANITY'S
ONLY CHANCE IS FOR THE
SUPERHUMANS TO SWALLOW
EACH OTHER?

DON'T
GIVE ME
THAT!





THE DELIBERATE TAKING
OF HUMAN--EVEN **SUPER-HUMAN**--
LIFE GOES AGAINST EVERY BELIEF
I HAVE--AND THAT YOU HAVE.

THAT'S THE **ONE THING**
WE'VE ALWAYS HAD IN COMMON.
IT'S WHAT **MADE US** WHAT WE
ARE.



MORE THAN ANYONE IN THE
WORLD, WHEN YOU SCRATCH EVERY-
THING ELSE AWAY FROM **BATMAN**,
YOU'RE LEFT WITH SOMEONE WHO
DOESN'T WANT TO SEE
ANYBODY DIE.



WE CAN STILL INTERCEDE.
GATHER YOUR FORCES. TOGETHER,
WE CAN BE THE **WORLD'S FINEST**
TEAM.

TELL ME
YOU'LL **HELP**
ME.



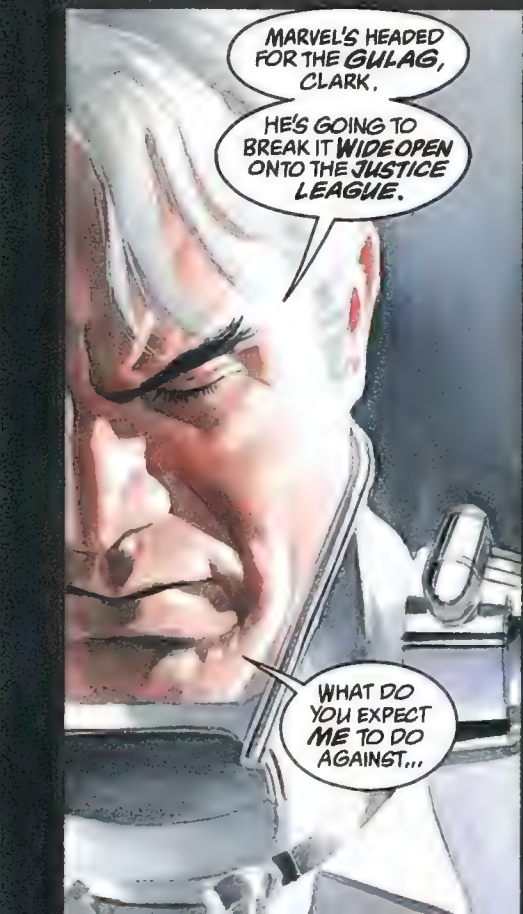
I WILL TELL YOU THIS **ONE**
THING. THERE'S A PLAYER YOU
HAVEN'T **COUNTED ON**.

CAPTAIN
MARVEL.

MARVEL...?

HE'S BEEN
BRAINWASHED,
SEVERELY. ONCE,
THERE WAS A GOOD KID
INSIDE HIM, BUT HE'S
BEEN **DRIVEN OUT**--

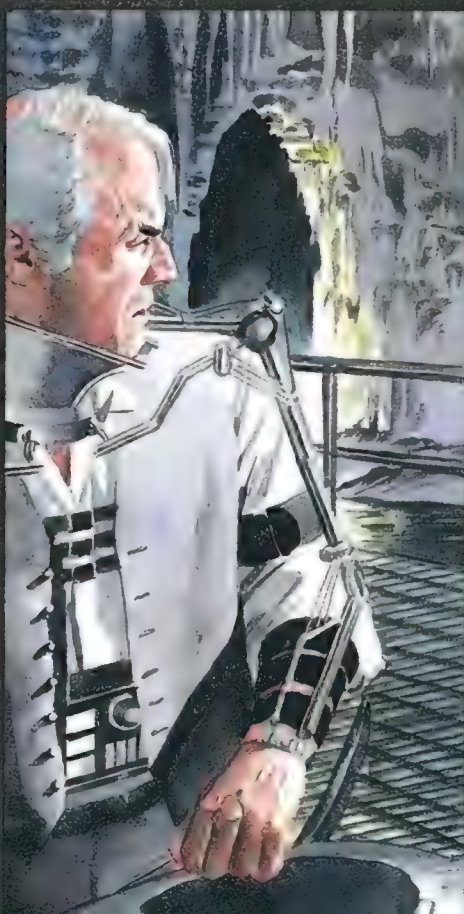
--AND I DON'T
KNOW HOW YOU'D EVER
FIND HIM AGAIN.



MARVEL'S HEADED
FOR THE **GULAG**,
CLARK.

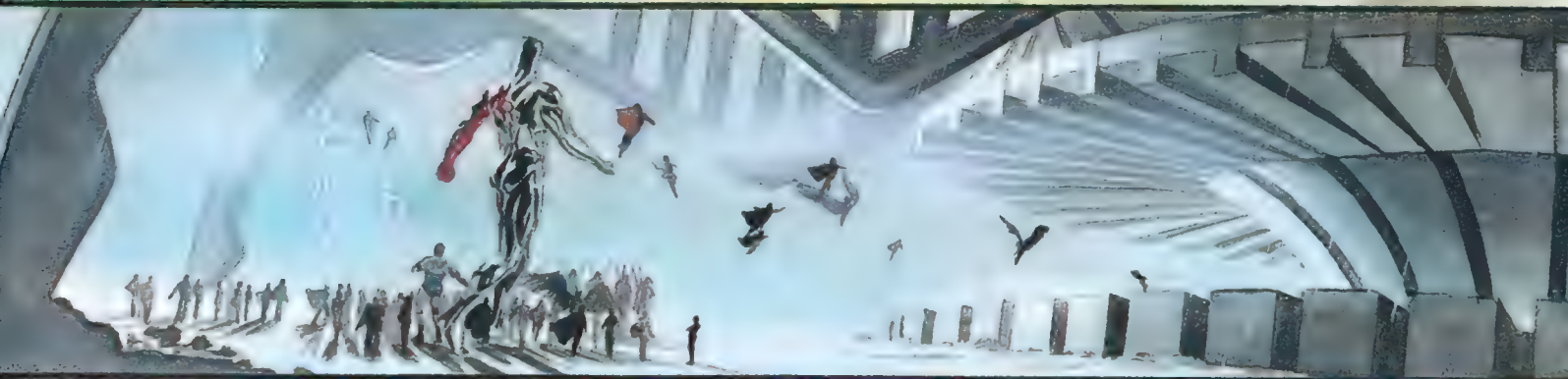
HE'S GOING TO
BREAK IT **WIDE OPEN**
ONTO THE **JUSTICE**
LEAGUE.

WHAT DO
YOU EXPECT
ME TO DO
AGAINST...



SO THAT'S
WHAT THAT FEELS
LIKE...

Without a word, my spectral guide opens all horizons to me at once.



I see the air scorch in Superman's wake.



I see the dawning horror in Wonder Woman's eyes.





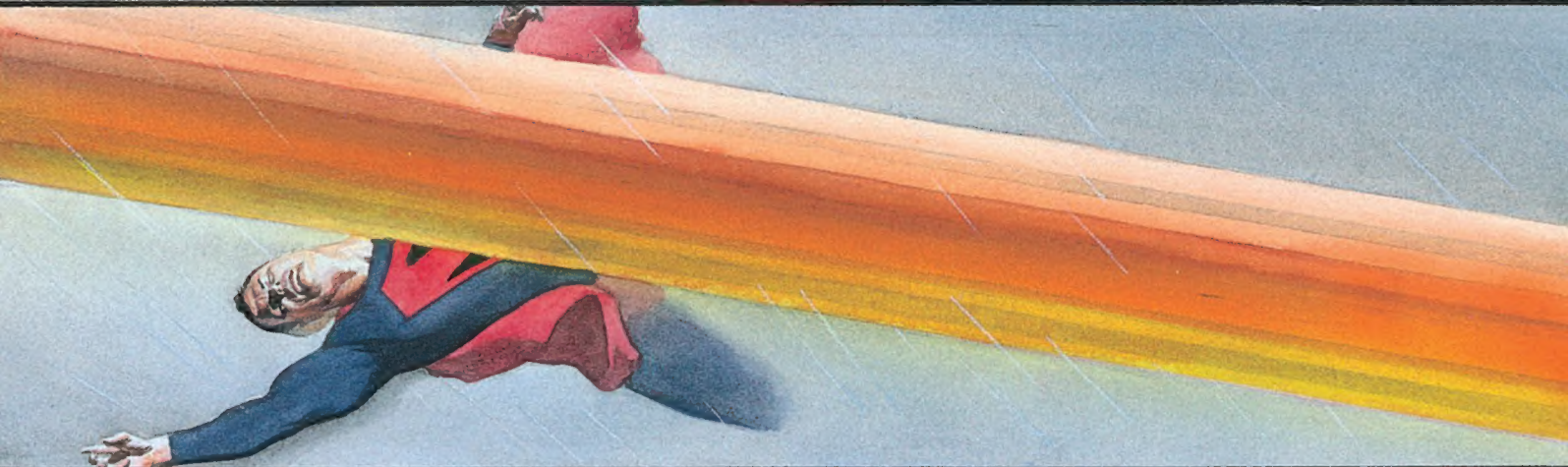
I see Ragnarok
at last unfold.




And worst
of all ...



...I see the desperate
hopes of the one man
who might yet stop it...



...turned to ash
and cinders...



...by a single bolt
of lightning.

Armageddon
has arrived.



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The Hand